"—there is a closer privacy behind a wooden fence"

Like Summer's Cloud

A Book of Essays

BY

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To remind
J.P.D., M.K.D. and F.M.E.
of a pleasant week
of motor travel in Switzerland.

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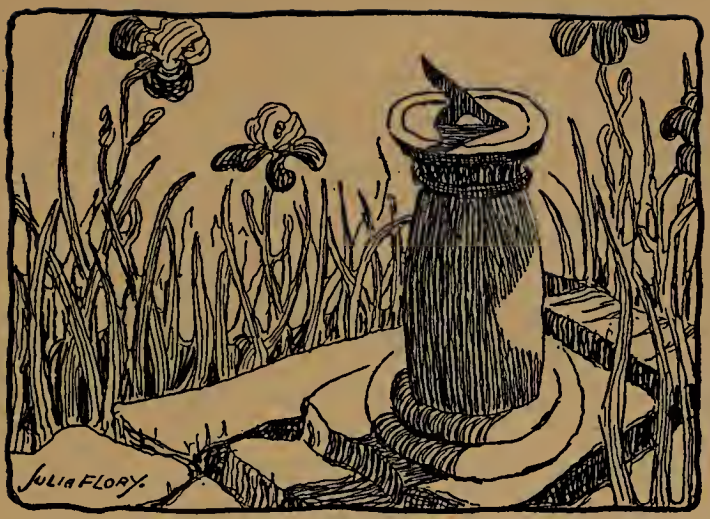


"—the crawling hand upon a dial"

Like Summer's Cloud

Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder?

I SOMETIMES wonder what has become of the town in which I grew up. Its change to a metropolis has been too gradual to be noted, moving in stealthy progress across the years like the crawling hand upon a dial that shows no advancement to the eye. In essence not so long ago we were a village—of greener leaf, of vacant lot and puddled muddy streets. We were immature and stretched beyond our clothing like a gawky girl whose legs have grown too fast.

Tall buildings rose only here and there among our shops, and I remember our first elevator with its one-armed attendant, and the red plush

seat beneath a mirror. There were already iron freighters in the crooked Cuyahoga, loaded to the hatch with ore from Lake Superior; and busy tugs with wadding at the nose butted them around collision bend beneath the viaduct while traffic fretted for the draw to close. There were docks and lumber yards and smoky stacks—for our progress started in a smudge of dirt—and furnaces at Newburg on our city's rim threw a ruddy glow upon the winter sky and dulled Orion's belt. When these fires burned hot one could think that the Northern Lights were answered from the south and that a message of the stars was flashed through space.

But the better dwellings then came almost to the center of the town, and a boy of stout leg could walk to the country on a holiday and be home for supper. A line of verdant hills was apparent from a roof, roughened at the top with trees, with hint of a truant world beyond. Against this slope our flood of growth washed up year by year, like a tide that cannot ebb against a rising moon, until now it has overflowed the edge and spread in a shallow stream to the fields beyond. We are massed with mighty buildings, our pavements are thick with motors, our suburbs besmirch the county, our shops and factories speak with diverse foreign tongue as if work again were stopped on Babel. It is imperceptibly that we have changed. The cloud that rises in the summer's sky moves not on such secret silent foot.

I was thinking of this recently as I came along the street. What has become of the gas lamps? In former days a spry old fellow with a ladder and a can of guttering oil trotted past at twilight to touch the glistening row of jets that flashed upon our porches. He was the punctual clock of wintry days that called us in to wash for supper; but on summer nights we heard him from our reluctant beds and followed the dancing shadow of his lantern across the wall. He must have been of thrifty habits, for presently he came among us on a cart that was a higher and more clumsy cousin of a racing sulky that was denied a record. From this wavering abutment he needed only a short ladder, and the horse with quivering lip turned his anxious head to see him safely down. But sometimes a fly pestered the patient animal and, at a flourish of the tail, the lamp-lighter roared a *whoa* from his reckless station against the shaft.

I look from my window now and I see none of the lightning rods that once guarded from the tempest all unpious folk who had not faith in prayer; and I think the stricter churches still protested that the rod was a sacrilege against the purposes of God. I see trim gardens with clipped hedgerows where back yards used to lie in the friendly clutter of kitchen and of laundry.

And once there were hitching posts along the curb—iron cunningly fashioned like posts of wood

with metal knots—, and those of our richer neighbors held horses' heads on top with rings hanging through the nostrils, as if the brutes had borrowed a savage custom from the ladies of the Fiji Islands. It was usual on the way from school at four o'clock, when spirits were at the top, to jump these posts in follow-the-leader with books dangling by a strap—on a single hand, if one were expert; but no boy ever leaped them after breakfast when he crept like snail to class. He walked, rather, with sullen step and muttered to himself the slippery boundaries of Ohio. Ohio came first in our geographies and, by its larger space, it seemed to boast that we were half the world.

"—a savage custom from the ladies of the Fiji Islands"

And there were stepping-stones upon our street, so that a lady might mount to her victoria without exposure of a prudish limb. Mincing steps of stone! for the clock upon her stocking was not, as now, a public dial. Where are those ladies who took the air for shopping with colored parasols tipped across their shoulders to guard their pink complexions from a freckle? They worked in thread lace. They sewed a comforter from

checkered squares of red and white. They inherited a Paisley shawl. They kept a piece-bag of faded finery (fragments of a wedding dress) and made a crazy quilt—farms, to my fancy, of many shaded fields with zigzag fences all of silk. When old

"—turned a cunning hand to pie"

they wore a cap of lace and congress gaiters with cloth elastic sides loose upon the ankle. And Time in softer wrinkles, like crackled baking china, wrote its record on their faces without concealment.

These ladies wore gingham of a morning. They turned a cunning hand to pie, and knew a homely remedy for every ill. In each house there was a medicine closet of sticky bottles and half forgotten pills, to be touched for recognition on the tongue and cast aside in May at cleaning time. They laid away their linen sheets in lavender or sweet clover; and the china spout of a fragile teapot wore a homely guard upon the pantry shelf. Those were days, as an older novelist would say, when a blush mantled a lady's cheek. Their limbs moved then in the secret twilight of four petticoats—once the symbol of the sex—, but now the brazen leg has issued from its home and won the vote. And with the passing of the limb, these stepping-stones are gone. The snows of yesteryear! Frost and summer moon, daffodils and petticoat have yielded to the changing season.

Every house had a fence between it and the street; and lawns did not, as now, run unobstructed to the walk. Doubtless the open lawn is of prettier looks, but there is a closer privacy behind a wooden fence; and, when I wander on our older streets where fences still prevail—shabby streets now fallen to the poor—, I catch a snugness in the way of living that richer folk have lost. The slamming of a gate when guests arrive for dinner is no longer a signal to the kitchen for the tipping of the smoky kettle to the silver soup tureen. And the very tureen is gone, once

the center of hospitality, with its mighty ladle and its invitation for a second helping. We are allowed now, in hunger, a second piece of chicken, but never another dish of soup. These gates were the prey of Hallow-een, and it lay within the routine of this night's mischief to lodge them on a stable roof or from a lamp-post like the unhappy victims of a riot. Our race of shrunken youth must be content to tick-tack mildly against a window on this night of fallen deviltry or to flatten a nose to scare us.

Trees upon the street used to wear lattice collars to save them from the nibbling of a milk-man's horse. Buggies that once rattled on the cobbles have trotted into silence—and the slapping of reins and the restless stamping of horses' hoofs. We hear now but the whir of rubber tires and the challenge of an ugly horn.

Leaves of our once more wooded village lay to deeper thickness in the gutter; and girls scuffed along the curb from school and believed the sound to be the rustling of the silk skirts that haunted their ambitious dreams. The smoke of these October fires when lawns were raked, the smell of ripened earth from August's heated oven, still linger in my memory to build the unsubstantial fabric of the past.

It was the youth of our street who cut the grass; and, in order that the task might not cramp the freedom of a Saturday, we were up at six o'clock

and ran barefoot on the dew—yet with care against lockjaw from a rusty nail. And weeds then were pulled from the crevice of the stones and salt rubbed in. In this same crevice we now plant weeds for decoration, and lay the stones loosely for a richer crop.

Church bells rang on Sunday morning to call us to the service, and any laggard at his window might see his neighbors trickle from their gates to join the sober current of the righteous. Men who whistled wickedly to business through the week —"Annie Rooney" was new then—, now clasped a prayer book with a silver cross dangling at last Sunday's lesson and banished mirth. Are church bells gone forever? Have Baptists grown so sluggish? I listen vainly on a drowsy Sunday morning. There was a time when we set our clock by the punctual tolling of the Methodist sexton across the street. He concealed his holy ritual beneath red suspenders through the week, but his bell spoke with sober Sabbath voice that roused the godly to the fiery thought of hell and sent them pelting with their hymnals. Two by two on a rainy Sunday his congregation mounted up the steps like Noah's chosen freight, as if here were a larger ark of brick that would be lifted in mercy by the flood and floated off to Ararat.

Do children still go on strange journeys, pounding at their hoops? Do they walk on stilts? Wash poles once gave but a lazy Monday to hold-

ing up the wash, and all the week beside they stretched us into giants.

Every house had its stable with a loft for hay and its Sunday carriage covered with a cloth. The drive was marked with whitened stones, with a high step for richer folk underneath a porte-cochère; and I used to wonder if these stones might be the whited sepulchers of the wicked Pharisees whom we condemned in Sunday school. It brought the rascals strangely neighbor to our street and invited us to dig at night for dead men's bones. For to produce a Pharisee with shovel on a moonlit night would top all pirate treasure. Beyond the delicate front-room nose of wealth a manure pile stood between the stable and the alley fence and distilled to a rising wind of August a perfume of extra calory.

With stables gone there can be no alley in any proper sense; for the essence of an alley is its stealth, its hidden course that slinks beyond the range of observant windows and lends its hand to mischief. No boy skulks now behind a contemptible garage to strike a match to his first cigarette—a cubeb, it is likely—, or chews himself to nausea on a cud of Mechanics' Choice. But the stable was a more generous shield for the practice of our minor vices. There was a time when an errand for a quart of milk or two-cent cake of yeast took us all the way in alleys for pure adventure and, with silly hand groping for our pistol, we

turned all corners wide against the chance of ambush. 'Twixt gate and shop we trod an older and more vivid century, and a certain cluttered path between house and barn opened at its farther end to an alien world where ragged boys snatched off our caps and ran. Our foreigners were Irish then and gangs of them came up from the flats to parochial school. They were peaceful enough but we looked on them as enemies, and the thumb upon the nose and outspread wiggling fingers was an insult sharper than foul speech.

Alleys were baseball fields, for the sheer wall of the stables gave a carom to the ball and kept it within the bounds. *Over the barn was out!* and put the dishonored batsman in the field. A modern alley is too swept and dusted for these rougher games. There is no garbage can to mark the base. No syrup tins lend a pinch of chance to skill of fielding. Nor can I think that baseball has the old flavor of excitement when played safely in a permitted park with a policeman swinging his billy as a friend. The fearful cry of copper—*Cheese it, the cop!*—sent us scurrying in bewildered flight through a dozen alleys until we lost pursuit and came at last to breathless safety. And this was the peppery enjoyment of the game. Nor did our catcher play behind a mask, but he took the foul-tip upon his nose and dropped the carmine stream of heroes.

None of my unfortunate younger acquaintance

now has a flat-roofed shed in concealment from the street. There was a shed like this not far from us in those older days. One mounted to it from the pickets of a fence, but the ground fell off behind and the other end was pitched to a dizzy height with a wide prospect over adjoining gardens where grooms trotted horses for exercise. The roof, furthermore, was caught in an angle between two stables and was guarded from interruption and surprise.

One lay here upon his back through a summer afternoon and dreamed of a broader life. The sky was narrowed by the clutter of higher roofs, but white clouds mounted past the chimneys and were the swift galleons of our truant thought. Youth of wide ambition might meditate upon the days when it would sail as an equal comrade with Captain Kidd and slit a wizen. It was here we practiced the strange oaths that mark the sea. I recall that a lightning rod climbed to the roof above and offered a hope it was Jack's beanstalk to the kingdoms of the sky where giants drank blood; but we were too dizzy to clamber across the jutting cornice, and it was a path that teased our wanton wish forever.

To this roof a boy of looser rearing in his home once fetched a dog-eared transcript from the *Decameron*—a vile copy from a corner shop, peddled for a dirty profit. I did not understand the worst of it, but its excitement haunted a month

of feverish nights. I have looked since vainly to find the story—a tale, it seemed, of one who climbed a sheer embattled wall and kissed a lady who slept beneath the stars. And yet, as I recall, it was not all loss; for something in the mystery and hot passion of the south bred in me a kind of chivalry and, half in fear, girls became creatures sacred and apart. Once a comrade pulled a girl by her feet down a slope of grass until her skirts were lifted to her knees. She laughed as if it were a jest but I remember his insolence with amazement, for his fingers seemed to soil her freshness. Nor can I forget a touch of moonlight on the *Decameron's* dingy page, the palm trees blowing in the dark, the smell of tropic incense. It is a silver world far off that graces still my recollection.

Where are the solid wooden fences on top of which we sat in uncomfortable balance to gossip of the batting-averages of baseball, or to spit within our padded mits like Chief Zimmer of our city nine? It was but recently that a friend of mine told me he lives neighbor to Chief Zimmer, and I asked at once if he were six feet nine and was grieved to learn he was but six. The Chief has now retired from the practice of his high profession, and in summer he putters like a common man in a garden among his flowers and consorts with daffodils and hollyhocks. I am informed, however, that he attends all games and that his

fingers show the whacks and scars that brought to him our adoration.

What has become of the torchlight processions that were the powerful argument for votes in a great election? Their feeble glowworm, once thought so pretty, would be lost in our brighter lights. Where are the bicycles with tinkling bells that thronged the evening pavements and sipped a nickel soda from a stool—that crowded into Conrad's crimson parlor in the Circle for ice cream and chocolate cake?

Rocky grottoes are no longer built in parks like little castles on the Rhine—we were strongly German then—with paths leading upward in the bushes. From a platform above one might spit at minnows in a pool. Ships sail no more by clockwork on our city ponds, with a tin captain on the bridge gazing through a telescope, as once on the sunny waters of our Public Square. There are benches still about the pond, but the tidy race of nurse girls jiggling children off to sleep has been replaced by ragged labor out of work.

Red carpets are not laid now upon the steps for visits after supper, with colored pillows at the end of each as hint of invitation. There is no casual dropping-in for euchre and a dish of apples. It was seldom that we passed a solitary night—seldom that chairs were not brought out from the sitting room to reinforce the native rockers of the porch. Rockers were then the fashion—the symbol of our

softer wealth—the distinct product of America, unknown to Europe,—and a lady placed a patch or button in the leisure of their soothing rhythm without thought how she might save the world.

The very word *caller*, threatens to disappear from customary speech. I remember one old gentleman—he was an obscure uncle of Thomas Edison, still unknown (it was pronounced *Eedison* then),—who turned in at our gate always in the summer twilight. A stout Republican, he enjoyed a tussle with a Democrat, and my grandfather and he came to nightly blows upon the tariff. James G. Blaine was his god and our anathema. We praised Grover Cleveland, but he hinted that he drank too freely from a whisky flask on his fishing trips and that our infant industries, unnourished on the soothing bottle of the tariff, were starving in their cribs. Every evening his dog knew his destination and trotted ahead to predict his master's slower foot. We have parties still, to be sure, but we dress in spangled clothes and the friendly village has departed from our streets. Except on invitation we stay at home and wind a solitary clock. Or a restless foot takes us to the corner for a movie. We are at last a city—a foreign, flat-foot city of Russia and the Balkans—and have paid the price of our prosperity.

Hammocks were the fashion with open mesh and fringe and a stretcher at the end, and often they were slung in the back yard between the

apple trees. And to sit with a young lady in a hammock was an intimacy denied upon a sofa. It seemed a device for sudden lovers, and sagged in the middle to an easy familiarity that loosened the heart upon a moonlit night. No lady could deny a hand, and even a freckled nose was boosted to a husband in such tight contagious circumstance.

There are now no boys who peddle apples in an August twilight. Popcorn has come to wealth and has left its whistling cart for a sedentary stand. With the coming of electric lamps the match-boy—three large boxes for a nickel—has gone out. Ours was redheaded, and I am persuaded that he glowed with burning sulphur to advertise his wares. We used to wet the matches and rub the sulphur on our palms, or we marked a darkened wall with frightful smoking letters. Paper whisps stand no longer in a vase upon the mantel to teach us thrift. The movie is easy to our reach and has driven off the German band that begged a dime to support its brassy concert. No more does a hand organ come among us

"Paper whisps . . . to teach us thrift"

with infested monkey to soil agreeably the summer night. What would a monkey do for pastime if he were denied his fleas? The organ stood upon a single leg, as if nature in a stingy fit grudged it a full equipment for its wandering life; and it lay against its master's stomach like a weary traveler broken on the road.

Hardly a ragpicker drives now his drooping horse to sing of the wares he seeks. Yesterday I heard the call of such a merchant, but he was a decrepit rascal of dirty shaven face and without the beard that marks an ancient prophet. His tune was cracked with disappointment, and I think he did but work sluggishly in an inherited profession that did not engage his heart. Could he, like his grandsire, cast such a scornful glance upon a discarded suit to batter down its price? Could he rest his knee secretly against the scale to lighten a weight of pipe? The money from this bargaining was ours and it went to the coffers of a shop that was crowded with the litter of toys and marbles that a boy desires. Do such shops still exist to satisfy the eternal appetite of youth? Do old ladies of jelly-bounce preside at a pail of grab bags? Their wares were once the calendar of seasons and one might know the winter or the spring from the fashion of the window that changed from sled to kite to rubber balls.

We used to buy a paper bucket of ice cream from Conrad's—six dishes to the quart—, and

make a night of it with cake, or try how far a single lemon would stretch among the crowd upon our pillows. There was a drink, also, that foamed up from vinegar and baking soda and was not to be despised by an unjaded gullet. It had to be gulped like a bromo-seltzer while still it sizzled, for the dreg was flat. These times are gone. Our summer's cloud has swept across the silent sky.

My memory lingers with our older neighbors. I know their voices, a dusty hat, the pattern of a suit, dandruff on the collar, the very tapping of their step beneath the gas lamps, an eccentric cracking of the knuckles, their choice of cake and apple, a sucking sound between the teeth (for imitating which we once were spanked), the nodding of a head when a hard decision faced them in a game of euchre. The echoes of our corner run in the long broadcast of memory to sound upon the heart forever.

Their leisure was ours. We saw them in their gardens and on the street. We sprinkled the lawn on a summer night with company across the fence. An errand of an evening was a succession of salutation from porch to porch, with hat in hand. It was usual to leave the curtains up, but one neighbor drew his tight on Sunday nights for a stealthy game of whist; and we marveled how his house escaped the lightning and thought the marksmanship was bad. The solemn Methodist bell, tolling folk to church, evidently had

these rascals in its mind, and hoped to shame them with a hymn. The land of milk and honey where shrill sopranos traveled surely could not be the terminal for a sinner's trip. Nowadays we stay indoors or issue swiftly to a motor, and there are houses hereabouts that seem deserted through the year. Is it always the season at Palm Beach or the Riviera? There is never so much as a jiggling of a curtain, or dustmop knocked upon a window sill.

We are recluse even at spring cleaning—which was once the year's confessional—and furniture is not piled now upon the porch to give a greater space inside for pail and rag. It was only the piano that did not migrate from the parlor in the spring. I know of no touch so homely as a sofa beaten in early May upon the front lawn when this household flood is at its height. But furniture that is of pretty freshness in an accustomed niche grows shabby out of doors. Hardly does an uncovered moving van so sharply reveal the blemish of its load.

I can remember when our first apartment house went up. We were used to tenements, of course, where poorer families climbed through barren hallways with a smell of garlic at the open doors. But here was something new—sniffed at by conservative folk used to village elbow-room—a building with grilled iron doors and marble steps. Silk curtains gave color to the windows, and here

dwelt folk of prosperous purse in a flat life of two dimensions with a neighbor perched upon their shoulders. Respectability no longer required a lilac bush and whitened Pharisees along the carriage drive.

A horse car rattled cityward with a fare box and a driver on a padded stool. Did one neglect to drop his nickel the driver pounded with his whip-handle against the glass. There was straw on the floor in winter and the windows clattered in the tempest of the journey. Only men of broken age signaled for the car to stop, but ladies in ignorance stepped off backward and tripped and fell in a wopse of petticoats. The horse gave place to electric power. A pickle factory and a public boarding house came among us to shock our stiffer crinoline. One neighbor, and then another, put in a telephone, and there was less use for gossip across the fence. The click of croquet balls died away. And now the first racket of a one-cylindered motor—cranked at the side, with a crescent handle bar for steering—smirched our peace. We were growing to be a city.

Men of business used to come home for midday dinner, with pork and beans upon a Saturday. Fried mush was Sunday's breakfast, and popcorn and milk made up our supper. We used sugar on leaf lettuce and on melons—they were mush melons then—and we saved all broken crusts of bread for puddings to which we gave sentimental names

to disguise their humble origin. Celery was tough and stringy and without a heart. Watermelons were round and had not been stretched into the likeness of a giant cucumber. Apples were not aristocrats in separate tissue wrappers, but they stewed as democrats in a common barrel. Pepper, salt, plates and cloth stayed always on the table and were not swept to a fashionable discard between meals. Napkin rings were used thriftily to lighten the laundry work. We employ maids now in uniform, for the hired girl at three dollars a week is gone—with her dusting cap and slippers slapping at the heel.

The rubber plant was still the vogue, and a best vase stood at a forward window against the street as a symbol of our taste. Ladies painted china with pretty rivalry of pansy-strings, and worked a design of heavy ridges on the tablecloth. And what has happened to the window curtains of stiffly patterned lace that swept the floor, to ornamental hatracks, to flowering wall paper, to twisted fretwork over doors, to central chandeliers with sparkling pendants? One of these prisms once came loose and we looked at snowfields through it and broke the sunlight into color. We had not been told about the spectrum; and, if science had not been there before us, ours would have been the first discovery. Sweet are the uses of adversity, for it 's the shattered light that reveals a glory.

There were bird's-eye maple dadoes in a dining-room. Curtains were made of beaded glass like long strings of swinging macaroni. It was an age of tidies—the mark of woman's disfranchisement—the pattern of an elk upon a chair back, cloths over the piano with long silk tassels. And there were hollow cornices and picture wire, a transparency of Niagara Falls that boasted of our travels to our jealous neighbors.

Lace curtains, after washing, were stretched on frames to dry, and these frames were scarce and were lent from house to house. The top of fashion was a chair that rocked on stationary runners with coils of springs that squeaked. These chairs were done in leather, and ours was stamped with Little Lord Fauntleroy upon its back.

There are now no carpets to be ripped up at cleaning time, with pads of dusty paper underneath and a caution not to drop the tacks around. There are no bric-a-brac shelves hanging in the angle of the sitting room. Folding doors, marble mantels and inside blinds are gone. Coal scuttles, if they still exist, blossom not in red roses. Base-burners of shining nickel with an urn atop and a piece of oilcloth underneath have disappeared. Bronze Ladies of the Lake stand no more on the newel post of the stairs, nor are front doors carved so massively in oak. Statued clocks—ours was Lincoln Signing the Emancipation Proclamation—have ceased to be the fashion. Houses have given

up their round watch-towers at the corner where once through dusty attic windows we looked on a broader world of roofs.

Sugar then was taken solely in a spoon and coffee cups had guards for whiskers. Towels were of common use and one wash rag served the family. For a bath we ran to the kitchen to feel the boiler behind the stove, and when it rumbled we knew that the water was ready for the tub. A cold bath was still considered a shock to the nervous system.

"—coffee cups had guards for whiskers"

There were corner lots with paths that radiated each to a special destination—one to the butcher and one to the candy store, but the path to the saloon showed the widest marking. The railway station was called a *deepot*, a veranda was a porch, an attic still a garret nor was it ceiled and set with lights. Laundry was wash. Soup was soup, and not purée or consommé.

We still wore homely pants and socks and stiff shirts of starch with a tab in front as a hoist to underwear. Neckties came made-up. Buttons, not laces, held our shoes. Straw hats were decorated inside on a gauze with pictures of popular actresses; and I remember in one of mine Clara

Morris, Mary Anderson, Lotta and Fanny Davenport—arranged in a four-leaf clover. And clothes wore out only when a hole appeared.

Hucksters now come seldom down our street with potatoes and red pieplant in the spring from neighboring farms. Peddlers of brooms and dish-pans have passed away, and merchants of Armenian laces and silk have departed to more credulous districts. The cry of knives-to-grind no longer breaks upon our quiet street, umbrellas-to-repair, or glass-to-mend that rings a bell to the rhythm of a lazy step.

It was only lately that I walked on a parkway toward the Heights—a boulevard now well inside the city, with pavement chalked for the instruction of the crowded motor traffic in the thicker hour when business shuts its door. Strolling aimlessly by Doan Brook, whose shallow water still trickles from the hill, I saw the remnant of what had once been known as Blue Rock Springs. This had flowed out from beyond our scanty suburbs at the end of a dusty tramp from the Cedar Avenue horse cars. It had been a journey for a holiday with a blanket spread upon the grass for seat, and its sulphur cup was the sickish draught of a picnic lunch.

I stopped a bit to look. A last rotten timber of a wooden bridge across the stream was fallen on its end, but a path climbed upward in the brush.

Here had been a pavilion to hold the spring with tin cups on chains and wooden benches—but all was gone. Nor was there any soggy ground to show where the healing waters had spouted up. And now, as I poked about, there came a clatter from the steel framework of a lofty building hard by the path; and the waters of the spring, if they still exist, must run like a sewer beneath the basement to stain its pipes with green.

But before me, in the din of rapping hammers, there rose the far-off countryside I once had known; and the roofs and towers that lay below the hill were the unsubstantial fabric of my memory. Like a cloud that moves on silent foot the city has swept upon us and the village of my youth is gone.

"—I lay idly on the bank till twilight"

These Years of Freedom

I HAVE been permitted earlier than most to shake off the saddle of necessary livelihood and bind myself only in voluntary harness. It is seven years since I gave up my routine desk to a successor and brought my hitherto infrequent avocation into the major hours of day. There was a perilous chance in this, for an avocation pleasant enough in vacant holidays is not always sufficient to truck one through the week. One must be sure that his free employment grips him deeply before he snaps his fingers at an old routine, lest he sit thereafter with idle brain and lay himself on a barren shelf. But for several years my pen had carried me with such satisfaction to a nimble midnight that finally I took the leap. The hungry wolf permitted,

and I swept the penny litter from my desk and went singing to an unknown world.

To divorce myself further from business I was already packing for New York—the mecca of our scribbling folk—and in my new leisure I walked to the park and lay for an afternoon on the grass, dreaming of the books that I would write, tossing here and there among my thoughts some bit of plot or circumstance, planning a hot assault on editors fortified against a novice like myself. The tracks of a railroad lay below me and, as the afternoon advanced, I saw the New York trains put out. In their heavy uproar the great world opened to the east; and I lay idly on the bank till twilight, carving in thought my fame and fortune.

I was no longer young, for more than a cycle of business stood behind me. Necessity had forced me to a drowsy flagon and I had slept for many years. For fifteen years I had rotted, as then it seemed, in a muddy dock from which no vessel sailed except on mercenary quest; but now at last the white hazard of my adventure flashed on an open sea. The bell and whistle of my servitude was mixed in the general city and sounded no longer in my special ear. A street car rattled near-by but it had ceased to be the prison van that bore me to my jail of harsh employment. I was free as the clouds that galloped from the west.

To be as joyful as I was that afternoon seems almost to invite destruction by the jealous gods,

and yet these seven years with but a few exceptions have been filled with happy months. A patient horizon still lags far off on this ocean of my choice, the pleasant land that I dreamed upon the grass does not show as yet its gilded peak; but I have stowed my anchor and my former shore is but a pencil-mark on the misty rim of water. Already, though I am but a novice with my pen, I have written and published nine books, and even if they have been but apprenticeship to further work they have been composed with leisurely and honest purpose. A million words have been my school in the creation of a single sentence. I have, in a measure, taught the tempest of my head to fit itself to harness; and a stormy gust of thought now grinds a daily grist.

Never by the stretch of a solitary or even discouraged hour have I regretted my decision. I have not, it is true, tied myself entirely to my new vocation. War and subsidiary interests have now and then intruded, but their unwelcome interruption has yielded its dividend of wider outlook. And as I contemplate my former business life—even though distance has smoothed its dull annoyance—I know that my choice was right. I exchanged an exacting and jealous occupation for a variety of work, and for a frowning monogamy I acquired an innocent and smiling harem of endeavor.

Work once proper only to a holiday and the hours of night I may now attempt by day without the gossip of my neighbors. I blushed in that older life of business if I were caught uptown upon my avocation when the penny-pickers had sought their vineyards. For I seemed to myself but a dabbler among a sterner race. Once I stole a week for writing—as another man might take a week for golf—but I was a culprit and met challenge with evasion and apology. This is the price of an avocation, for rejection slips were my entire reward and I could not acknowledge to my friends such trivial payment. When writing turns to a profession and gets its footing in the trade, one shows a harder rind to the lifting of an eyebrow.

And now, after these years of perching in New York—lodgings here and there—a view from a hired window that looked on an amazing nest of crowded life—I am home again and may cast back and moralize upon my freedom. I have been two men in my time, and now I mingle to a third. I may sort the strands of my composition and find the source of each.

New York was opportunity and for three years, to overcome my tardy start, I kept my nose closely to a desk—lonely years in part, for I had cut the strings that held me to my friends. I had only a slim acquaintance in my adopted city and when the day was done I was too tired to seek

out and build up friendships. Nor was I of an age that can grip a new acquaintance. I was not, perhaps, as churlish as this sounds; but the

"—an amazing nest of crowded life"

friends I made were few, for chiefly it was my job to write. Men younger than myself were far ahead and it was my task to trot a little faster

through longer hours to gain a yard or so against my handicap. There were theaters, of course, and music, transitory acquaintance and snug parties of an evening; but I gave long days to writing to gather in a scanty harvest of October and took no recreation until the afternoon was nearly spent. Then, too tired to talk or listen, I walked through miles of streets to rest my brain in other confusion than my own. I was like a student who buries himself in the strict corridors of medicine, and these three years were my diploma. And so I came and went, like a ship that sounds its horn in fog and sees but the water near its prow among misty shapes that pass without discovery.

At home again, I do not regret the time I spent in business before this crowded freedom came; for I know now that its strict confinement is proper training for a writer. It instructed me in the uses of responsibility. It warned me to snap my fingers at desire, to play fairly and give a full measure of my thought and labor even when the object did not grip my heart. Its stretch of weary days, moreover, taught me to value my enfranchisement. And my release came at a time when I still had energy to fill my freedom.

Business brought me contact with a life of which so many writers must be forever ignorant. It is not only this world of truck and sales and ledger that is outside their life—the wholesome hurly-burly of office and of factory, the confusion that

forces concentration. But in business, also, there is a daily give and take that breeds a generous estimate of others and helps one in turn to bear a private disappointment. A writer too often meets repulse in a lonely hour. In a measure he stands aloof in both failure and success without the tonic and corrective that comes with association. He feeds his meditation at a silent desk and his jaundiced thought turns inward.

But chiefly business instructed me to work upon necessity and not to wait for a rising wind of inspiration. I learned that only in long hours, in full and exacting days, may success be won. One must work when his brain is tired, and not sit idle for some exultant morning to drive his pen. To-day is the appointed time or, as with Ulric Brendel in the play, the poem rots within the brain. A man must stay at his stodgy desk and write himself to better humor for his task. Business teaches this, and were Greenwich Village of harsher discipline it would dab and trifle less. In art there is no playtime school such as our current whim of education prescribes to cheat children of stiffer training. There was many a clever fellow just around my corner in New York who could have been a wiser writer if strong necessity born of business had seized him by his flowing tie and held his resisting nose closely to the inkpot. The sharpest sprouts of wit are watered by a steady trickle of perspiration. These

are lessons that every honest writer must get by heart, and I will lay a hazard that these are the rules, however learned, that have guided every better writer to success. I have spoken of leisure; but it is the leisure of thought that wanders closely through its subject, and not the leisure of idle hours.

I wish to stress this truth even if its first statement seems too obvious. In my life in New York I became acquainted with several writers—beginners like myself, with untapped brains—who were my betters in every particular except their willingness to work. If they chewed upon an unproductive pencil for an hour with nose tilted at the ceiling, they judged that the muse was silent and gave the day to idleness. If a plot faltered, they sulked for want of entertainment or went out to range upon the town. And so, with a larger capital of brains, they declared a smaller dividend of performance. Not only was their output less—a secondary matter, for our shelves are already crowded—but through sheer laziness and excuse, miscalled temperament, their writing went slipshod from their pens; for they plead that revision dulled their spontaneity. Does an actor grow fagged on a second lifting of the curtain? He is but a novice to the stage who cannot play for a month and give each night freshness to his scene.

But a writer must do more than this. It is

his task before he gives his pages to his fraction of the public to think and work many times and by accretion expand and build his theme. He must bring his thoughts freshly to a second and a third revision in order that each shall add its ounce of weight. It is not enough that he throw his subject starkly from his pen, for it is by repetition that his paragraphs acquire their grace and speed. A sentence that is written only once, can be read only once with profit. But if a sentence is built up through successive mornings and molded maturely to its form, it yields a second harvest to a reader who wonders at thought he skipped in a first perusal. Thin talent, if it sweats, can run a race with genius.

There are persons, I suppose, who can write a swift and perfect chapter at a sitting. It may be that men of genius and long training can do this and know—know absolutely—that they have sowed and reaped their final harvest. But lesser writers must stumble on toward art through tired and patient hours, and plant and pull out weeds. It is better to write one book four times than four books once. And if an author, between revisions, would let his product cool then once more tinker at the text, he would grow a crop of pages that might hope to weather out the season. Half-cooked pork is not so raw as a book that has not simmered in the brain.

And now for these last four years I am home

again. Little by little I have picked up my former thread of life—save only business routine—and my writing runs more easily for its old companionship.

For I am rather a village sort of person. I like to live where people know me, where I do not need to explain myself, where I am accepted for what I am and not for what I do. I live with neighbors who know my follies and excuse them by their friendship. If a curtain be up upon my street I know that my acquaintance sits within and that I shall be welcome at a knock. In New York my telephone was but a barren entrance to vacuity—a hundred thousand names, but few of them my friends—whereas here at home its booth is an invitation toward a bit of gossip. Across the wall of my apartment in New York I used to hear at ten o'clock the tapping of a pipe smoked out at bedtime, and it was a hint of the homely living I desired.

Now and then, it is true, I chafe if my morning be broken by too frequent jangling of the telephone, but in better mood I accept the interruption as an evidence that I am wanted in the life around me and meshed in its common circumstance. There is satisfaction, also, to have the years so secure one in casual friendship that even a scarce and intermittent meeting keeps the flame alive. A conversation is picked up as it was left a year ago. A friendship waits for circumstance to revive

it. A first name is exchanged across a dozen years of separation in tacit consent and without challenge of neglect. This is the advantage that accrues to him who lives at home. William Dean Howells once told me—I have boasted of this before—that he looked back to the Columbus of his youth as his real home. He had lived in many cities, but he remembered best the line of red carpets on his neighbors' doorsteps and the friendly visits in the twilight.

To break my hours of writing I teach a bit in the college around the corner. I have a desk and office of my own, with a window on the campus to refresh me with its parade of youth. I am still a director in the company I left and once a quarter at least I visit the scene of my former employment to hear a report of sales and profit and to pocket my dividend to lay beside my royalty from books.

It was but lately, on one of these quarterly visits, that I stopped for a word with the man who succeeded to my task. His window looked out as of old on the dull waste of Long Street that rises from the flats, and I glanced to see whether the veterinary still kept his hospital for dogs across the way. Time was when at my work I had heard his patients yelping and had judged he had fallen to their jaws. The signboard was still there—a rearing horse, descended from remoter days when the building had held a

livery-stable. And the blacksmith alongside was still in business, with a forge that lighted up the dusk. Trucks, as formerly, labored on the hill with merchandise for us and for our neighbors. Seven years had not erased a circumstance. It is a district that would scarcely alter to Rip Van Winkle's sleep. The world will never sate itself with hammers and saws and pencils, with rat-traps and kegs of nails.

My friend's desk was still piled with invoices as in the days when I sat there, and he was checking their prices and indorsing them for payment. A typewriter unknown to sonnets clicked noisily at his elbow. A clerk ran in and out with orders. It was the old routine unaltered. But I missed the bookkeeper at a desk below. He had been so bent in other days upon his ledger that the hoop of his shoulder persisted through a holiday. He never used to go out for lunch but brought it in a box; and in the summer months, for recreation at the noon hour, it was his habit to shoot at flies with a rubber band and lay their corpses in a row upon his pen tray. In August's hunting season I have counted as many as twenty flies in a single killing. And now fate has snapped its rubber at the huntsman.

My successor still has the habit of sitting without his coat. I never knew a man who could so well endure a draft of wind from an open window, and half the quarreling friction of our office rose

from his need of air. And there he still sat in the January wind with comfort—as if this were but a morrow of my former day—controlling the window, while other men sniffed and sneezed with collars raised against their ears. Everything was the same. The same crates of paper were

"—in August's hunting season"

stored in the basement with a torn edge where a rat still nibbled. Boxes of ink still mounted to the ceiling. The same merchandise was piled upon the balcony. Even the order was the same, and blindfolded I could have fumbled out any given article and slapped its dust for a customer without mistake. There are numbers, meaningless to the ignorant world of laymen, that must always linger with me as factory designations—a certain pencil, a brand of pen—and when these numbers haunt my memory I know what stock

was kept and the fashion of its pile upon the shelves. The same trucks blocked the crowded pathways. There was still a jangling of elevator bells, the roar of mighty presses. The same men plodded at their tasks—friendly fellows whose first names will stick forever.

But each quarter, when our meeting has been adjourned, I am content to leave the building with a satisfaction that still lingers from that former day when I swept the litter from my desk and went singing to the world of my adventure.

"—a trot around the garden"

Hints for Scholars

IT has occurred to me that the time has come when we should lay a new appraisal on the older heroes whose virtue we now accept too blindly. If there is any scholar, therefore, out of work, or one who seeks in the long vacation to add an honest penny to the pittance of his winter teaching, to him I give the suggestion that he poke among the celebrated ancients with a modern and more exacting eye. If he attacks a dusty reputation with fire and sufficient venom he may hope to swell his income to a living wage and ride to class upon the cushions of a

mortgaged motor in dignity that is but a peg below a plumber.

The last word has not been said about Adam. If that affair of the apple happened to-day we would think a man no better than a cad to fasten the blame entirely on his wife. If truth were known, Adam was sick of the same old fruit for breakfast, and he had nagged her to use her wits to tempt his jaded appetite. Anything but manna! he had exclaimed at last as he dusted off his crumbs and vaulted to his leopard for a trot around the garden. It was the obliging housewife in Eve that sent her to this strange forbidden market—surely an innocent business, as when our own good wife tries her expert thumb upon the ripeness of an untried kind of melon and lays it beside our morning napkin.

Or the apple—baked, perhaps, with cream (for the pump was not invented)—the apple made for both of them a dainty supper in the cool of their evening dishabille as they sat by the singing waters of the river Pison which encompassed the garden roundabout. We ourselves in similar circumstance and more ample costume would loosen the lower buttons of a tightened waistcoat to confess our excellent repast. And I can fancy Adam in party dress—in full fig, as we might say,—scraping up the banquet's last creamy dreg and tilting back his stool for ease. It is a pretty picture of home-life in Eden, with the happy hon-

eymoon scarcely rubbed away—tigers nosing up to beg a bone, giraffes swinging a friendly tail among the lilacs, lion and lamb gamboling across the lawn in pursuit of the apple's core. But Adam was a cad not to acknowledge his part in a dish so toothsome. He took the woman for better or for worse, and he should not have deserted her on the challenge of a Perfect Stranger.

Then there is that unsavory business of Jacob and Esau and their mess of pottage. These scandals seem always to run to food. I cannot remember that Jacob was reproved in our Sunday school for his dirty bit of trickery. Our superintendent, who rollicked through the naughty week as the secretary of the Y. M. C. A., was clad now like a Sabbath crow in solemn black. He always grew quite red in the face over the sins of Judas and Potiphar's wife, but against Jacob he never lifted his little finger. Who was Potiphar, anyway? He comes to us solely as Mrs. Potiphar's husband. Mrs. Potiphar's Husband! It would be a good title for a play.

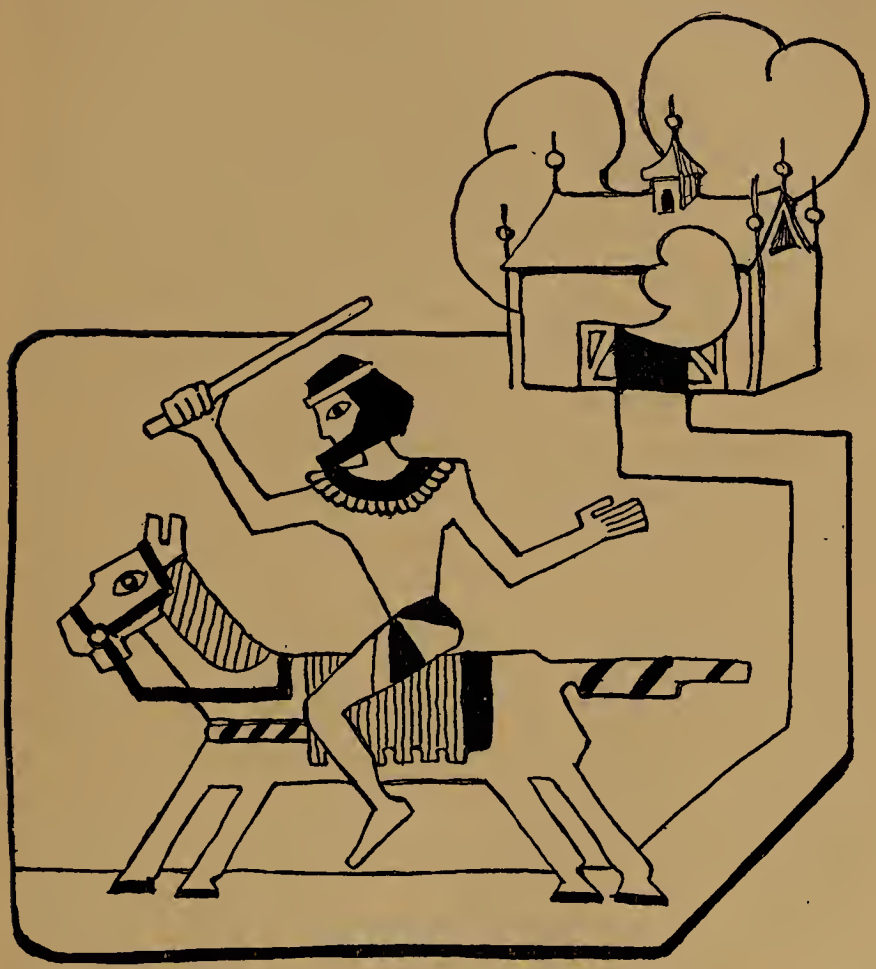
But Jacob was esteemed a hero, and a picture of his glistening ladder was exposed upon the classroom easel with a text to explain the angels mounting up to heaven. Jacob, like other saintly men of the older Israel, led a checkered life among a dozen wives, but he shrewdly invested his dishonest profit from the pottage in Yiddish six per cents and became a personage. No child nowa-

days, regardless of sex, is named Judas or Potiphar's Wife for obvious reasons, but we have whole streets of Jacobs who still honor their tricky grandsire with applause and imitation. Here is a reputation for the just assault of a scholar if he would bounce to class in wealthy cushions.

Nor am I sure that the sainted Moses escaped from the house of bondage with clean skirts. I hold no brief for the builders of the pyramids, who were doubtless hard masters and shrewd to exact long hours against the local. Did they not employ even the children of Israel upon Cheops? But the fact remains, nevertheless, that Moses *spoiled* them—spoiled them out of all manner of household possessions. Let us sweep aside the glamour of Moses' long white beard and think clearly! He was found in the bulrushes, accepted Egyptian hospitality and then he spoiled them. He was given a bed in the straw, as it were, and then he burned the barn at daybreak and departed at a gallop. Nor can I look at the Red Sea episode as decent warfare. Neither tank nor mustard gas was quite so cruel. There was a touch of Moses in our recent Kaiser.

Next I would squint into the affairs of Abraham and Hagar. The poor woman was sent to wander in the wilderness because of Sarah's annoying jealousy. Without a wallet! Without a change of underpeplum to bridge the Monday's wash. A wife of those more generously connubial days

was expected to accept a rival underneath her roof and to employ a dozen handmaids of easy beauty for the petting of her husband. Sarah,



"—he burned the barn at daybreak and departed at a gallop"

I fear me, was a shrew; but the S. P. C. G. should have brought Abraham to terms.

Was it not David of pious memory who put

an acquaintance in the front of his army for a target where the battle was the thickest, and took his wife before the funeral meats were cold? She was at least number six upon his domestic string, with fresh faces outside in line when his fancy should have cooled. These certainly are not the morals of our street to-day. And David, also, was a bit underhanded with Goliath, the champion heavyweight of Gath. Here was a contest that we might call a wrestling-match with rules all set—catch as catch can when the whistle blew. And yet, before they came to grips, David fouled him with a slingshot. It was, so to speak, a blow beneath the belt and Goliath should have been given the cup for the trophy room of the G. A. C. I care not who lifted his voice unto the hills and how the mountains skipped for joy. A slingshot is not the weapon of an honest sportsman.

Samson is neither the first man nor the last to be trimmed by a pretty woman. The rascal should have taken his hair-cut good naturedly without revenge. At the opera lately, in the smash of the final act, I looked to see whether he were caught as he deserved by the falling walls; but I am ready to swear that he escaped without a bruise. Nor could I detect that anyone, even Delilah, received much harm from the painted pillows that were dropped from the grid above.

And I question the wisdom of Solomon. Its

evidence hangs too entirely on the rival petitions for a baby. You may recall that when these two ladies pushed their heated claims, he lifted the tender youngster by the heel and offered to carve him into equal parts. Manifestly it was an absurdity, like Portia's bluff at Shylock's pound of flesh; for, legend to the contrary, no woman even of those indecent days would have consented to so unprofitable a butchery. It is the good names of these ladies I would defend. Nor can I think, having perused the ribald songs of Solomon, that the Queen of Sheba's visit was either wise or innocent.

But it is Noah, who has moved for these many years in the best heroic circles, who chiefly stirs my anger. I commend him to all scholars out of work, professors on sabbatical and to students who sweat upon a doctor's thesis. We must judge this business of the flood dispassionately.

Flatly!—Noah was a Snob. He took too keen a pleasure in his exclusive ark—its cubits and gopher wood, its window and its door in the side thereof. With one less mastodon and elephant in his hold—clumsy creatures that required a bit of flipper room—he might have admitted to his ship on the sailing day a few friends upon his street—ordinary persons like ourselves, neither good nor bad, persons who played bridge at a penny a point on Saturday and took a sober cocktail at a party. A rhinoceros left behind—

the brute could swim anyway and might have trailed the ark to shallow water—a rhinoceros, I repeat, would have yielded up a cabin to a needy family.

I was myself caught in Europe in July, nineteen fourteen, when the German deluge broke through the Belgium dike. I have suffered and I understand these things—the bribery of ticket agents, the surging crowd about the White Star Line, the scrambling for a steamship berth, the gloom that settled on the tourists when ships were taken off to be fitted into gunboats. The steerage was good enough even for folk in sable who were used to an outside cabin and a bath. My heart goes out to Noah's wicked neighbors. He should have moved the tables from the smoke-room of the ark and put in cots.

When the rain came up and he launched on the dreary waters, he should have tossed a line to his acquaintance struggling against the rising surf and pulled them in. But Noah, in the faultless summer panamas that mark the captain of a liner, jerked his sailor cap down upon his nose and steered for the open sea. There is a picture of it—the flood, I mean—in my Bible—mothers on tiptoe with their children, folk caught in their night-clothes clambering on the rocks for higher footing; for the flood, by this evidence it seems, must have started before the dawn. One poor soul has only his fingers above the water, with a bubble to mark his gurgling nose.

What really was Noah's excuse? I surmise that during the time the ark was building he was looked upon as a crank, and this breeds perversity in stubborn persons. "What is this fool notion," it was muttered, "that has got into Master Noah? He was wont to be a jolly soul before this sudden piety seized upon him." And ladies at their tea in ancient gardens must have gossiped of his eccentric prophecy. "Silly ass!" they sniffed. Strong language, I confess, for ladies; but remember that his was a wicked city. "The sky is bare of clouds," they whispered. "Forty days of rain! Clearly Noah is in his dotage. He hasn't been the same since he passed his five hundreth birthday." And they tapped their heads to locate his disorder and called for another cup of tea with brandy and a lemon.

Or perhaps his neighbors stood around with hands in the pockets of their gaberdines and asked him what he was about. Why did he build his ark of gopher wood? Was there any good reason why he pitched it both inside and out? Did he have a pool of slimy water for the recreation of the hippopotamus? These animals thrive in mud. Did he intend to let the animals wander loose from stem to stern, or to chain them in a cabin? And then, also, why in common sense did he want to save the worthless animals? Why, for instance, the coyote, or the snake that had proved so fatal to his curious grandmother? And if he took

monkeys, would he take an extra pair of fleas, or rely on the monkeys for their customary cargo? Would he use a braying jackass for a fog horn? I fancy that a good deal of this cheap wit was tossed about while the old man pitched his timbers, and that the wags from the grocery steps sat around, whittled and plagued him with obvious remarks of little humor. Certainly the village pestered him with questions and kept its tongue within its cheek. All this is a nuisance to a busy man, and it may have chilled Noah against his neighbors when the windows of heaven at last were opened to the rain.

He was bothered, doubtless, with agents of marine insurance, with salesmen who wished to close on a bill of fodder, with chandlers and hardware men, peddlers of nose bags and insect powder, butchers with raw meat to feed the lions, merchants of storage eggs, canned fruit, Mother Sill's and powdered soup. Every commission house from Tyre to Sidon must have fretted him with bargains. Old sailors of the sea, also, quarreled with his style of rigging and the hanging of his rudder. I fancy that the papers put his picture in the colored supplement and sprawled the news in headlines. AGED SEAMAN PREDICTS BAD WEATHER AND BUILDS AN ARK.

Nothing is said of Mrs. Noah, and I wonder how she took to her husband's whim. Only her daughters-in-law were to be aboard for bridge

and gossip. There is something too intimate in such a trip with only relatives along. I hope, however, that she entered into the spirit of the cruise and shopped for a sailor suit and canvas shoes.

Did a flood rise now on sufficient warning Thomas Cook would sort us into select parties. No crowding—no steerage—spacious decks—sunny seas—ports of old romance—side trips included—guides in uniform—lectures in the after-cabin—dancing beneath the stars! Twenty-five per cent on application! Balance one month before the sailing day. It was here that Noah missed his chance of profit.

And his conduct was outrageous.

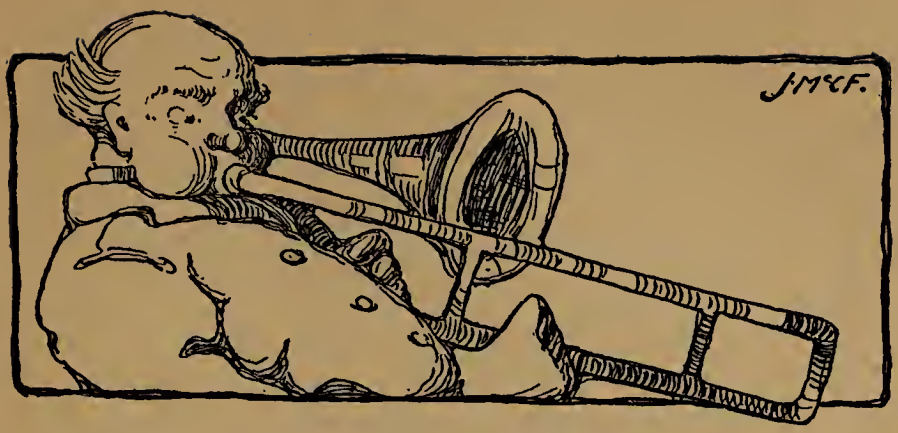
Suppose that Lake Erie, our local pond, sent a mighty wave across this wicked city of bridge and mild flirtation! Suppose that one person—a pious man of wealth and station—one who heads subscriptions to a hospital—a deacon in the church—a dignitary in tall hat who passes the plate on Sunday—the owner of a yacht—a neighbor—a man, perhaps, who has sat at dinner at our cost (Noah must have mixed in his younger days with sinners. Was he not found once in vulgar company, drunk within his tent?)—suppose that such a man had been tipped off upon the weather and sailed away upon his yacht, leaving the rest of us to drown!

Careless of our welfare, moreover, suppose he was at pains to take aboard the live stock from his ribbon farm at Mentor—our fashionable summer

suburb—leading his blooded animals up the gang-plank, two by two,—even a few scrubby beasts without pedigree that he would never miss! Of course he would excuse his conscience with the pretext of divine instruction. Dogmatists always hide behind their maker's voice. Did not the torture of the Inquisition start at a hint that was claimed to be from God? Infamy always wears a pious cloak. But would any survivor of this local flood—perched on a chilly steeple for an hundred and fifty days—would he collect a subscription to start a monument?

Noah, I repeat, is an overrated saint. It is time for a new appraisal of our older heroes.

"—perched on a chilly steeple"



"—its hot blast cannot be ranked as music"

On Playing the Trombone

WHAT is there about a trombone that persuades one to take it as a job? Surely its hot blast cannot be ranked as music. While the violin makes an easy flourish of the tune and runs about in pretty exercise, the trombone does no more than grunt alternately up and down as if it got out of bed on the wrong side and were booing down the concert. It never flings itself into a happy chorus or lends a merry rhythm to the waltz. Untouched by higher feelings when Isolde dies it stands apart upon its head and shakes itself to dry its watery gullet as if stricken with a quinsy. Hardly once is it allowed the tune either in tragedy or in joy, and it merely fills the chinks of another's shrill emotion.

Nor has the trombone any domestic virtues. It is never asked to perform after dinner when company is about. Its raw crescendo in an hour

of evening practice blows ashes from the hearth and neither book nor checkers can hold attention. It never stretches its toes across the comfortable fender on a winter night to breathe a sentimental air. There is nothing cozy about a trombone.

Now and then, of course, like the meanest of God's creatures, trombones have their glorious moments and I confess that there is nothing of mightier boast and energy than their triumphal entrance in Aïda. Here in the crisis of the pageant—when the Nubian slaves are chained at the chariot wheel and the sable queen has mounted to her throne—in this exalted moment the trombones are intrusted with the tune. Mad elephants could not lift their trunks in wilder frenzy. There are six of them, swelling with excitement, blowing at the roof lest with lower aim their tempest sweep the stage. But trombones, until anger rouse them, are unambitious creatures, content if now and then their yellow blare peeps above the din in brief felicity.

It must be that none but disappointed musicians study the trombone—broken fellows whose fingers are not quick enough for the frets of a nimble instrument, lean widowers who puff to support a family, or composers of rejected work who pipe sourly another's masterpiece. They are Bolshevists on a soap box, as it seems, inspired to overthrow our city with concerted blast. Or perhaps they are lovers with refusal gnawing at their

hearts; for never yet did trombone breathe an accepted passion. Search as you will in love's fair record you will never find trombones in triumph at a moonlit casement. And if Paolo had blown a trombone at his mistress in the soft Italian night the chapter of their passion would have been broken short. Why, therefore, should a man of conquering beard spend on the trombone the unwrinkled years of his majority?

On the contrary, petty as it sounds, there is something about a drum that seizes our affection. Its melody is naught, but no instrument yields so quick a dividend to practice. One may grow an aged beard in vain assault against the violin, and the piano eludes a daily hour of patient slavery from bib to crutch; but the drum is a pleasant vagrant that needs no whip. It is untutored by the parlor. It has no hint of holy living. It comes of a stout barbaric race that cuffed their women and went to bed in caves. Both big and little drums, whether of boom or rattle, loosen our primal instincts and make us cousin to the savage.

A drum need not sound an A and fret whether it be pitched aright. A padded stick is all. Nor do misanthropes apply themselves here to spread their misery. Drums, rather, are the tools of contented spirits who, knowing that they lack the finer wrist for strings, are yet willing in their coarser way to express approval of our disordered

times. They accept the world as they find it and do their bit to make it jolly. The mighty cylinder—for I write of large peripatetic drums rather than the sedentary sort—the mighty cylinder is balanced

"—the mighty cylinder is balanced on the stomach"

on the stomach, and a boy trots ahead to ease the weight lest it jounce a recent beefsteak. Its master is another Atlas, who holds the world on softer cushion. The sticks are swung in sharp rhythm above the head, and then a tremendous boom for the left foot starts the procession briskly on the march. It is a persuasive instrument of

war, and I wonder that our plans for peace neglect the suppression of the drum. Take the profit out of drums and we shall coo across our friendly borders.

But a drum does not always lack a softer voice to move the heart. I was told once of a man who in the first bliss of his engagement to a lovely lady—his soul aflame with happiness—prowled among the music stores until he found a drum of amorous rattle. Little did his patient neighbors guess when its racket soiled the evening air that in the uproar he loosed his soul to the moon and stars.

But why should a man give his precious years to the study of a bass viol? It saws back and forth listless and melancholy even in a foxtrot, like a Methodist caught at a naughty masquerade. It is a dismal frog that croaks against the tune. If a comedy is played on the stage above it never lends its ear to a merry jest, or in lighter opera does it peep across its shoulder for the kick. A bass viol is always bored. It works by the hour and jumps at the whistle. In a concert it plainly looks forward to a toddy and its slipper.

Only once have I seen emotion in a bass viol. In a dog-and-monkey show a huge gorilla squatted by the footlights as he waited for his act and in idle preoccupation he patted the bass viol's shiny head—a hazardous touch even with friendly velvet paw. For a moment the bass viol dodged

and wavered in alarm, but he fell again to lethargy on the falling of the curtain, nor did his dull mechanic eye show any gleam of excitement that lin-

"—it plainly looks forward to a toddy and its slipper"

gered from his perilous contact with the jungle. In every symphony each brass and reed anticipates a momentary triumph when it may flourish briefly above the hubbub, but no such ecstasy awaits

the bass viol. It is a nuisance, also, going home and stumbles up the steps of a crowded car.

I once knew a man who played the cornet, which, although it is small, has yet a vicious temper like a terrier fed on raw meat. This man, knowing that his blast might shatter us if released too near, walked in charity by night for practice to the shoulder of a lonely mountain. At this distance his horn of Elfland, echoed and tossed among the rocks, came to the ear in soothing melody as if the moon had roused a band of silver sprites.

I can understand a love for the cello, for its sober tune is unparalleled like a violin that has sowed its oats and come to mellower age. It carries a note of sadness and fits the somber end of day. And from the oboe there rises a pleasing truancy that persuades us that Pan has come again to sound his nasal reed on hill and windy stream. If a man be delicate of ear he will think that the older gods have gathered in the drowsy twilight to lament their fallen world.

Nor should the saxophone be utterly despised despite the rowdy company it keeps. In sound it is no worse than a coarser cousin of the cello—a poor relative never admitted to the symphony who in disappointment has taken to the streets and acquired the vulgar habits of the dance hall. Here in a sentimental moonlit waltz you hear its grieving sob for a wasted life. They tell me that

"—the older gods have gathered in the drowsy twilight"

in its soft infection when lights are dim lovers are quick to cuddle cheek to cheek.

But why the tuba? It hangs about the neck like a devilfish that sucks a victim down. Why the bassoon, with its clownish humor that thinks the world a jest? The wedding-guest, you may remember, heard a loud bassoon as he listened to the Ancient Mariner, which shows that jazz is older than we think and must have soiled the hoop skirt. On this hint Strachey might have colored up the night life of his beloved queen, and offered a wicked spark to Balmoral.

Or who would wish to puff himself to apoplexy on flute or flageolet while the violin takes a gaudier part with applause and safety? Does dire necessity drive a musician to his choice? Perhaps for easier livelihood he selects a coil of neglected pipe that competition has overlooked. It was needed in the village band, and so he gets his start. Though his fancy listens to the airy mystery of strings it is a common brassy vent that holds his actual thumb. At a concert I find myself studying the faces of the performers to learn the clue to their strange selection.

But how is it that people generally—the people all about us—choose the method of their livelihood? I catch myself wondering this as I walk the streets, and I pry into doorways and faces for the secret. We work in such stolid fashion for our bread. Most of the jobs of life in themselves alone seem so dull

—like the practice of a trombone—, the street so gray and barren—a mile of shops to perform the city's necessary tasks, the clank and grinding of dirty labor, the small peddling of trivial counters, the broom and mop, the sweat of seam and buttonhole, the filth of poverty and wealth.

In a usual mood we are too used to this to give it thought. It seems enough that folk shall rise and wash and soil themselves with labor. Our cities are but machines of a million whirling wheels where we foul ourselves until twilight leads us home. And then, with the rising of the sun, the routine sweeps again upon us. There are so few jobs that one would choose.

I look with amazement on a man who elects to be an undertaker, for he seems no better than a midwife to decay—a collector of a more personal domestic discard. I confess that there might have been a satisfaction once in drugging a mummy with sweet oils and precious spice to last a thousand years, but our modern practice—like so many arts of this transient world—is content if its masterpiece shall persist through but a fleeting hour of recognition. It must check one's happy disposition to go among folk always with a solemn flower and a smile of sad mortality—to be forever in consultation on silver handles and black broadcloth. Nor can I think it wholesome to pray for a month of dirty weather.

And a tailor does not commend himself to me—

puttering cross-legged on finery for another's elegance, smoothing out a wrinkle so that youth born with leaden spoon shall win an heiress and be happy ever after. Nor would I choose to be a milliner or dressmaker. These professions that beckon to vanity must distort one's faith. They take beauty's mechanism all to pieces and make a hundred ugly items of a pretty picture. They squint too closely for an imperfection in order that they may cover it with silk. A certain sweep of skirt, they know, conceals a dumpy figure, and a stripe will make amends for nature's careless hand. Such devices are born of disillusion. I prefer to be credulous to beauty and to think that God does all.

I would not wish to be a waiter and let my thumb alone mingle with the food, or in a bank to count out money in a shiny coat. It must be hard to sell tickets in a blizzard to the south of France and go home with leaky boots and chattering teeth. Nor would I willingly commend a silk beyond my purse. All these are livelihoods for a man with a trombone disposition.

In mild weather I have thought that a fruit stand on a busy corner might hold advantage to one of contented mind. No other merchant is quite so careful to polish his wares for the attention of the sidewalk; and surely to rub a red apple until it shines is a joy beyond the mere eating of it. These outdoor merchants quite draw my envy

on a day of smiling spring, and I am tempted to buy a tray and shoulder straps and wander barking among the shoppers. And the work of a sandwich-man—a flaring board both front and back to advertise a sale of bargains—is one adapted to a mild philosopher who can meditate among a crowd. He treads in such contentment. He has fenders in front and in the rear. A boy with pushcart is not so safe from jostling elbow, and he goes his way with slow tramp of higher thought.

Is it fancy that persuades me that persons of sunny Southern race are most inclined to ply their trade upon the curb and to leave the shop inside to their sullen brothers of the North? It is a Greek or negro who shines my boots at a sidewalk throne. An Armenian carries shawls and laces. Fruit that goes on wheels finds its chief engine in the Italian. Wherever music is peddled from a cart it is a Tuscan gesture that holds the smiling hat and goes begging for a penny. It is true, of course, that a Jew gathers in our rags—a race ubiquitous—, but it is likely that he wanders up from hotter cities. It is so that the habits of a kindlier climate come as immigrants to dwell in our harsher North.

I have thought, also, on a summer day, that it would be pleasant to sell brooms across the countryside—to chirp my wares and bathe my feet in every stream. For added sales and profit I would carry a load of tins and stewpans, roll-

ing-pins and grids. I fell in once with such a merchant. He was hung both fore and aft with all the cheap contrivance of a pantry. It seemed that a kitchen took the road. He needed but an egg and match to cook a banquet. I lifted him in my motor for a mile to catch a hint of his wandering life. He knew the taste of every farmer's wife and what dogs upon his route would bite. Each year the springtime called him like a circus and he tapped all summer at a thousand doors.

How do these folk select their livelihood? Does it pass like a four-post bed from father down to son? Is choice or necessity their persuasion?

I have myself no head for height; but if I were able to stand unmoved on the dizzy girder of a lofty building, this would be an occupation to my desire. Jack himself climbed not so tall a beanstalk. On this scaffold that rises from our midst one could dwell as a last outpost against eternity. With what contempt I would look down on the worms that crawl beneath on petty errand! The discordant traffic of the city sinks to the toys of a nursery floor. I have studied the workmen as they descend from their lofty platform at the blowing of the whistle to see if something lingers in their eyes of their wide frontier against the sky.

But I would not wish to mend shoes for a living in a dim room four steps below the sidewalk with but an upward squint upon the world. Boots and legs go by the window all day long, but they are

cut by the ceiling at the knee. Does the cobbler so dote upon his trade that he chooses his shop for this procession of his wares? He must gloat at the music of their tread that grinds away his leather. Nor would I be a tobacconist at the corner. It was Stevenson, I think, who hoped that he might be permitted to lay a cobblestone pavement and pour in boiling tar; but, although I waver and sniff the pleasant odor, I place my vote against its rheumatism in wet weather and the sour gas that seeps up through the sand.

I once talked with a quiet gentleman who assembles rags—not a vulgar fellow on a cart, but something rather wholesale with a tall building of unsavory stock. On a rising market he strolls among his crowded bins with proud unaffected nose, lifting out a garment here and there as its pattern pleases him. Nor does a butcher shop fall in my line. I quite sicken at a leg of lamb and I hear its plaintive bleating on the hills. It must be that these unromantic professions are merely safe harbors in a storm.

For a person of natural villainy a laundry gives a proper scope. A chauffeur of my acquaintance left a limousine to drive a hearse at higher pay. Has such a fellow no feeling of his business? The load mattered not, he said, and at least there was no one nagging in the tonneau. Not long ago I spent an evening with a gravedigger and I found him to be a jolly fellow untouched by

his solemn trade. Did he strike on the bones of Yorick he could have tossed them with a jest. Dentistry, of course, is quite another thing, and yet I marvel how a man applies himself to work of such discomfort. I once put a question of this sort to my own dentist as I lay at his mercy, but there was that in his manner of twirling the forceps that led me to desist. Each time I loll in a dentist's chair I wish to God I were a gift horse.

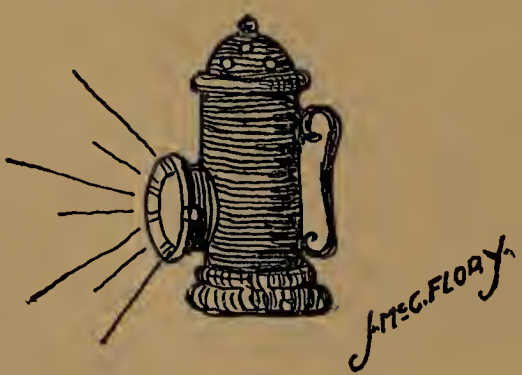
And how can girls be found to feed machinery all day, week in and out, with but a wiggle of the wrist to divert the mind? Except for an hour at noon, when they jostle out to lunch, they must sit in a stagnant dream. The variety of kitchen and pantry seems in comparison so vast, but machinery carries no taint of inferior station and there are movies every evening.

Go along the streets as you will, there are few occupations that one would covet for their outward circumstance. Most of them are dull, unless a cheerful heart supplies the candle. And when all is said, livelihoods are much the same—bleak or merry as the soul directs, for happiness dwells inside. One is reminded, of course, of Stevenson's Lantern Bearers—the lads of the Scottish links who carried bull's-eye lanterns concealed beneath their coats and went at night for sport through outer gloom. "The essence of this bliss," he writes, "was to walk by yourself in the black night; the slide shut, the top-coat buttoned; not

a ray escaping, whether to conduct your footsteps or to make your glory public: a mere pillar of darkness in the dark; and all the while, deep down in the privacy of your fool's heart, to know you had a bull's-eye at your belt, and to exult and sing over the knowledge." Here lies the essence of the butcher's and the cobbler's faith. Their comfort, too, is the lighted lantern concealed beneath their sordid business. Love and one's work are the two ingredients of happiness and the first of these gives savor to the second. There is a truth that often denies a fact.

But I wander from the trombone.

There are companies, no doubt, where these slippery horns stir the soul, and men sit about their winter fire in deep contentment and gossip of their rival skill in sliding to a baser note. And so, I repeat, at a symphony my eye wanders up the crowded bank of players to catch some deeper flash of fire from drum and secondary brass—some evidence of the shining lamp concealed.



"—it was in June when days are longest"

A Mug of Neglected Beer

IT was in June when days are longest and England lies in freshest coverlet of green that we rode bicycles from Ely to Lincoln between sunrise and the dark—one hundred and three miles, counting a kink or so of unnecessary travel inspired by greed, of which more presently.

It was done upon a bet. My brother Jim, who had scarcely ridden for twenty years, was offered odds that he could not cover seventy miles in a single day and a bonus was proposed for each mile beyond. Two inducements will move Jim to excess of exercise—his figure and a sufficient bet—and both of these strong reasons now urged him on. A button, perhaps, as a last persuasion, had popped off his tightened waistcoat. I was pace-maker, as soft as he and as snug upon the belt—but an amateur, for I had placed no bet on my endurance and had not a cent to gain

unless the champion choose to share his spoil. My nephew rode with us, Jimmie, a slim lad of fifteen with a hollow leg for the produce of his tireless appetite.

We came up from London to Cambridge with friends by motor. One of these was M——, who decorated the car with a white lily on a long stem—a paper trophy from a gala dance the night before at the Hotel Savoy where little favors were handed out to tourists. It seemed too much the emblem of a funeral, and it may be that she intended to lay it gently on the grave at Lincoln of one of us broken cyclists. She regarded me, I thought, with pathetic kindness, as if already she had picked me for the victim of the ride.

All together we saw the sights at Cambridge and wandered for an hour upon the Backs. Then, speeding the lily on its lazy padded journey to the north, we hired wheels and set out for Ely in the late afternoon, somewhat wobbly in our balance through lapse of years. There was a cricket match as we pedaled out of Cambridge, and a crowd, a silent cousin of our own at base-ball, soberly watched the contest. Having no accustomed brake upon his pedal, Jimmie fell against a policeman at the turn; but the officer looked him up and down and, remarking that he was a silly nipper on a wheel, he let him go.

To Ely it is sixteen miles across level country; and this, we thought, would serve as practice

for our effort on the morrow. We chose the first full day for our trial of strength, as any second day after even moderate riding would find us lame. It was better to make the great attempt at once with high enthusiasm and loosened muscle, and then go at indolent pace to the English Lakes with money won. But even on this first short ride a kink attacked my knee—nothing in itself, but the rumble of a storm.

It was dinner-time when we entered Ely and put up at the Bell. We avoided the City Temperance Hotel for fear of homesickness, for there are dry hotels in our own sweet land of liberty. The dining room was crowded and we shared a table with a cheerful little lady of chatty tongue who was aghast to learn our plans. To Lincoln in one day was a greater distance than she had traveled in a year. There are two kinds of English—those who journey all around the Empire, and those who seldom cross a county line. She was amazed at our ambition. But then we were Americans! She said this with a final shrug of the shoulders, as when one ends discussion with a lunatic. And, of course, the dear old soul was right—but a bet is a bet.

After dinner we inquired at the office wicket if we might be called for an early start. Of course. How early? Half past three! On Sunday morning? Yes, yes, sweet chuck, we answered. But we learned that no one was about so early and that it would

be necessary to get permission of the landlady to leave the inn at that outrageous hour. A shrewd look came into the face of Our Lady of the Wicket, as if she had detected a plot to lift the spoons. It was agreed finally, after much shouting up the back stairs for consent, that our bicycles would be taken from the shed and put for the night in the chauffeurs' common room. And would we be sure—and here the sour creature shook an emphatic finger—would we be sure to go on tiptoe and to rattle the knob of the outside door to make certain that it caught?

In a half hour, after much hard squinting at the ledger and tallying up of beer and cheese—for the English take their time at figures—in a half hour a waiter was rung up remotely from the kitchen to hand us our bill. All this while we were close at hand and strong enough ourselves to lift it through the wicket, but a waiter is as necessary in one of these transactions as a priest at a proper wedding. The Magna Charta provides that only a waiter may legally present a bill and take a sixpence for the nuisance and delay he causes.

These arrangements made we checked off the cathedral at a rapid trot both inside and out. We then quested among the village streets, where presently we bought a dry roll and an orange all around for our breakfast. It was hardly dusk when we went to bed; and stablemen and chauffeurs gossiped in the lane below our windows

and boasted of rival carburetors and ignition. I had a nap or two in this pleasant undertone before the room grew dark. In an English June a man of decent habits can hardly outlast the daylight, and he may spend a week in these northern parts before he beholds the night. Once I spent a month in Wales and I am ready to swear that the sun has no bed at all and that it hangs around the sky like a watchman till the dawn.

It grew dark at last. A dozen times, in my anxiety not to oversleep and lose the bet, I awoke and struck a match to mark the hour.

It lacked a bit of three o'clock by sun time when we arose and ate coldly in pajamas our roll and orange. It was in some such fashion that the Passover was eaten with staff in hand before the Exodus, and Moses must have nodded on his mule. The children of Israel have risen in my regard. They would be perfect employees in a gas works.

There was as yet no touch of light. We led our bicycles on tiptoe through the silent inn where a blue gas jet marked the turning of a corridor and, to keep our promise, we stole no spoons. The village square was dark and empty, and all the gossip of evening steps that had chattered in the twilight now lay abed. This properly is midnight, not the gay hour of a dozen merry bells when lights are brightest and men still frisk with pleasure.

In the first streak of Sabbath dawn we strapped the luggage to our wheels and made a start. It gives an impulse to conceit to be about when others are asleep, and early rising is a cure for self-abasement. Not even a level stomach on a stormy sea so lifts a low appraisal of ourselves. Ely still rested on its back and snored its morning hymn as we pedaled through.

We had hoped we might boast that we saw the sun come up, but a sleepy world had drawn against it a curtain of heavy clouds so that it might lie slugabed a little longer. The wind, however, was abroad, and it blew against us spitefully across the flat open country of the fens, as if it shared a profit on the losing of our bet and did its mite to thwart us.

This stretch of England is as level as your hand and there was a time when a mighty marsh kept Ely prisoner on an island. This isolation was its guard in the days of the invasions from the north and preserved, it is said, the traditions of its older life. In this respect the history of the fens is akin to Holland whose fields below the level of the sea were saved so often by the piercing of the dikes. This level district of Ely in a most peculiar sense is the heart of England, for here from Sleswick across the northern ocean was brought the custom of the folkmoot to flourish within this protection of salty water and grow to be the system of parliament to-day. There is a

story that King Canute once came by boat in later days to Ely and passed beneath the cathedral walls.

> Merrily sang they, the monks at Ely,
> When Canute the King he rowed thereby;
> Row to the shore, men, said the King,
> And let us hear these monks to sing.

There is a shallow hill as you leave the town, and this must once have been the water's edge where boats were moored. Even in times of recorded history there has been a subsidence of the English ocean, and older coast towns once of a busy commerce have beheld their harbors blocked with sand as the water has retreated through the course of centuries. All this land of Ely is now spaced into pleasant meadows of waving grass, cut by the canals that have drained its marshes to the sea.

For a good eight miles the cathedral tower watched us above the trees—a sturdy mass of

"—the cathedral tower watched us above the trees"

stone, with a lantern and flanking towers on top. For more than six hundred years it has marked the path of travelers. At Chatteris we stopped for breath and talked with a night watchman on a bridge. He had himself never been as far as Lincoln, but his sister, he told us, had once gone there on a charabanc and had brought home a colored picture which was now framed in gilt on the parlor wall. In a city there is a stir of life even at the dawn—lunch wagons, milkmen and other folk of perverse livelihood and habits—but the villages hereabouts lay upon their backs this Sabbath morning with not a voice to greet the rising sun. It was but natural in the circumstances that a line of Keats ran through my head:

> What little town by river or sea shore,
> Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
> Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

We asked the friendly watchman if some woman of Chatteris—perhaps a lady with insomnia—perhaps, we suggested, a young wife who walked with wakeful twins—might be about to cook us breakfast, but he knew of no one with these afflictions. And all chimneys were bare of smoke.

Beyond Chatteris, still in level country, we crossed the Forty-foot Drain—a canal of larger size that taps the smaller threads of water—, and at Doddington we turned west against a stiff wind that aged us by a good ten years.

It was pathetic on that labored stretch to see the champion with head down and straining knees, his face set hard with greed to win his bet.

We had gone, all told, thirty miles before we roused a cook. It was a mite of an inn at Whittlesey, just off the corner from the square. A boy was whitening the stone steps before the door, and he let us in on the chance that the missus was awake. Presently her head appeared across the railing of the stairs, with her hand clutching her kimono at the throat. She offered, if we would wait the quarter of a jiffy, to slip something on and cook us eggs and bacon. And so we slept in great chairs in the tap until the table could be set and our food laid out. Her daughter, meantime, played what she was pleased to think was "Rule, Britannia" on a piano beyond a thin partition. In several notes that struck a discord I thought I caught a suggestion of recent strife in Ireland and of friction in India. She was, I think, as her fingers slipped, spreading a secret propaganda against imperialism.

We were awakened by our eggs and bacon. I am not sure how many eggs we ate, but I am told that shortly there was a panic in the hen yard and that several of the roosters were heard to mutter that it was no use to try.

At Whittlesey there is a parish church of ancient record and much beauty, and our landlady was insistent that we see it. But with a bet and bonus

in our minds we turned at once with our load of eggs to the level road that lay westward into Peterborough. It was a day for deeds and not for sights.

At Peterborough we lavished a half hour on the cathedral, but it was chiefly for the comfort of an easy seat. We sat down hard on chairs that were nearest to the door—back row, aisle seats—, nor could the beauty of the transept or what else lay around the corner pry us up. I did, for compromise, read a paragraph in Muirhead. "The grand Norman* Nave is entered from the parvise porch, a rich early-Perp. addition." This is lightness unworthy of a guidebook. Just what a parvise porch is I cannot say.

A number of clerical gentlemen in robes of office now gathered for service—several beadles and a pope or two—and they gave us a friendly nod. We disentangled our bicycles and came away. Peterborough seemed a prosperous town, but it lay in a Sabbath calm with families coming up from every street to church. We were a dirty spot upon their sober cloth, so we pedaled off.

Market-Deeping lies several miles beyond and here we put young Jimmie in a jitney with instructions that he ride to Sleaford, twenty-seven miles farther on. The inn was the White Hart, and we bade him take a room, get his lunch, take off his clothes, go to bed and sleep until our arrival. He protested *infra dig.*, but we packed

him in and flung his bicycle in the tonneau. The motor, it is needless to say, was made of tin. It rattled and was manufactured in Detroit to soil the peaceful highways of the world.

We had beer and sandwiches of excellent quality at Bourne, with a great dog nosing up for a fatty end of meat; and if the innkeeper will address me I will write him a pretty advertisement to attract all weary cyclists. There were long benches around the walls of the tap and we lay for a half hour upon our backs until the beef had come to rest. It was now past noon and we were about fifty miles upon our way. The town of Sleaford, where Jimmie had been dispatched, was twenty miles beyond and it would win our bet. It was with some effort that I fitted my luncheon to the saddle. I have seen a trained bear in a circus mount a wheel with easier grace. Nor did the champion skip and leap.

I now discovered that one of my knees—the one that had plagued me out of Cambridge—had gone dry of lubricant; nor did machine oil, squirted at the joint, improve the bearing. By good luck, however, the wind that had teased us all the morning now fell away, and the road was level. My good sense tells me that there must be scenery of some sort north of Bourne, but I leave it to more observant tourists who do not lay a bet upon their strength. I do not wish to complain and be a nuisance to my readers, but something,

also, went wrong with an ankle. How I despised my wheel in those bitter hours of pleasure! Perhaps, I thought, a sharp blow with my jackknife would burst a tire and give me ease. Once we passed a graveyard lying lazy in the sun—rude forefathers and all that sort of thing—, and I looked at death peacefully as a fitting haven for the day. I saw myself already a gentle mound of turf with a pure white lily resting on my chest.

At every roadside tavern I begged for drink, but it was not beer wholly that I wanted. It was an excuse, rather, to dismount and rest my stilts. And when I asked for a second mug, it was delay chiefly that I sought. I was more stiff than lame, if I may use the word without offense as an embalmer would employ it.

It was four o'clock when we pedaled into Sleaford. Here our lazy cyclometers showed no more than sixty-nine miles, nor would they lift upon a bounce. As it seemed likely that here we would sleep and die; the champion, to insure his bet, rode several times around the square to complete his seventieth mile, and in doing this he roused the suspicions of the village policeman. Nothing like this had happened in sixty years—this burst of energy on a sleepy Sunday afternoon when good folk nodded at their tea. Round and round he went. The policeman counted seven and sauntered up to do his duty. It was just for a bit of exercise, the champion answered lamely to his challenge;

and then, in trying to dismount with a pleasant grin of reassurance, he fell into the gutter and was fished up by the trousers' slack.

We found Jimmie in bed with his boots on. We pushed him out, climbed in ourselves and fell asleep in sheer exhaustion. Then in an hour we sat up, drank a pot of strong tea, ate two plates of raisin cake and again pronounced that the bird was on its thorn. The landlady hesitated to take payment for the bed, inasmuch as we had not spent the night; but we pushed the money on her. "Wait till you see the room" we answered; and we took to the road toward Lincoln twenty miles away to win a bonus for extra miles.

A few shallow hills mounted up as we journeyed on—nothing, however, that a perambulator could not have taken on high without a knock. I was now so lame that I could dismount only by falling against a wall. Even in walking up a hill my legs had lost their hinges. It sounds piteous in the telling, but my rude companions with rough humor enjoyed my grief. I cared no longer whether I might have a lily on my grave. I asked but to be shoveled in and left forgotten. I was suffering from incipient elephantiasis. And I was thirsty. The still waters of the Twenty-third Psalm kept floating in my head—its green pastures, its rod and staff, and the cup that runneth over. A pleasant breeze, however, sprang up behind to boost me on the hills, and I know that nature

has a kindly heart. I have little acquaintance with shorn lambs, having been raised in the city, but it must have been a southern wind like ours against the hinder leg that showed them mercy.

Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

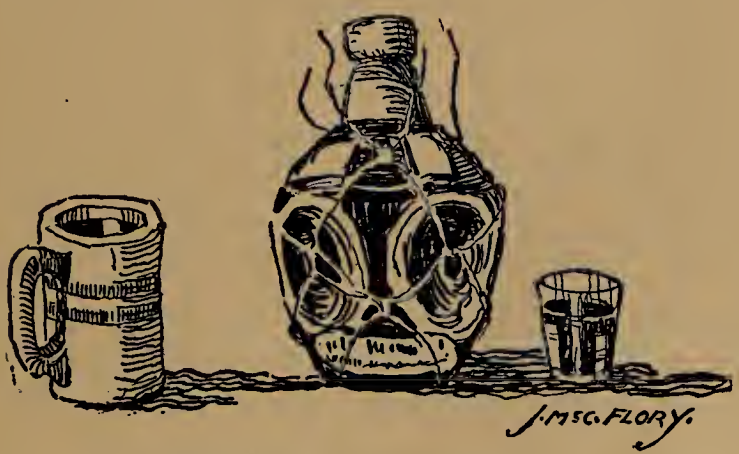
It was eight o'clock when we entered Lincoln, and by God's mercy it lay at the foot of a long hill. The inn, however, was perversely set at the farthest end of the town. I did not go bounding up the stairs. I sent the boots ahead so that he would not shame me in my ascent. Neither leg would bend and I was forced to rest my stomach for comfort on the rail and to swing my legs on a wide and squeaking parabola from step to step. A grand piano would have climbed with more dexterity. I boiled myself in a tub of water, rubbed on an embrocation made for horses and went to bed without dinner; for even the muscles of my jaw were out on sympathetic strike.

But the champion, with a greed for further bonus—for to him a sufficient bet is like an extra pedal—rode back upon our track for seven miles and stretched the day to more than a hundred miles. I was caught by the sandman in a feverish sleep an hour before he entered.

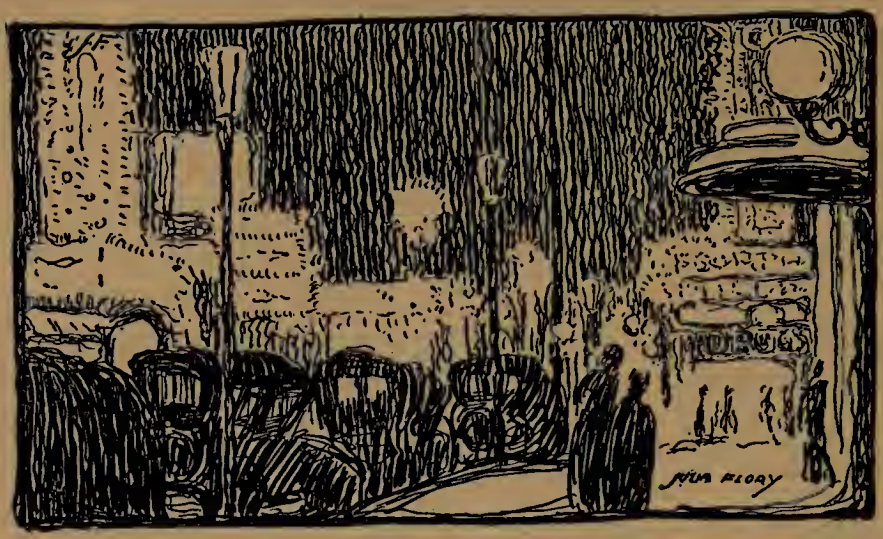
"And were n't you tired?" I asked him next morning at our breakfast. He smiled wanly to my question and poised a bit of salmon before he replied. "Judge for yourself," at last he answered.

"I could not decide last night which I wanted most, a whisky or a mug of beer. So I ordered both of them to be sent up. They were placed on a little stand beside my bed. When I awoke this morning—" and here the champion dropped a tear upon his salty fish—"when I awoke this morning, neither glass was touched." He lifted his hand to stay my sympathy. Then again he muttered in a mournful tone, "And neither glass was touched."

There is a moral in this pretty tale from Ely to the towers of Lincoln, but I refuse to tell it. To decorate my grave I still await the gentle lily that lies forgotten in eternal beauty somewhere on the English roads.



"—neither glass was touched"



"—their yellow glitter on the street"

On Going to the Movies

I LIKE the movies for their yellow glitter on the street, for their flash of rowdy celebration as if every night were Saturday and went at looser trot. A thousand lamps beckon in rival invitation. Fire has turned artist to hang a gaudy picture in a fringe of sparks. Light runs up a shaft like mercury stirred by sudden fever and breaks at the top into a shower of colored bubbles. As I steer about to make a choice, signboards wink on and off in more dazzling coquetry than plagued Odysseus.

Our four-corners, which only ten years ago was a drowsy street at night, now grows merrier as the hours advance. It is crowded with movie houses and vaudeville, with candy shops, soda

fountains and with restaurants of jazz that jounce a midnight supper to its place. The band of a skating rink blares from its window in shrewd advertisement. A popcorn stand of shrillest piping, like Hamlet's rooster, singeth all night long. Generous merchants of victrola disks leave their doors ajar in order that the sweet din of many instruments may do its bit in the riot of our evening symphony. A butcher-shop still lingers in our midst as a remnant of other days when our corners were domestic, and a dozen legs of lamb hang ready at a hint to clamber from their hooks and frisk in the happy discord. There is a general market with its trail of baskets for a hungry Sunday. Haberdashers put out a line of brighter scarfs and socks to meet the excited trade. And this is at our doors, just around the corner, to offer us a reckless evening; and we are no longer forced down town to find an uproar to our taste. It is a carnival on every night that seems proper to a Saturday alone—altered from that primal Saturday when nature first hung out the polished stars and rested from its labor.

I confess that I am no great lover of the movie; but I like to stroll in this confusion of the street and choose a play among these brilliant signs. From the yellow door of a Chinese restaurant there issues the racket of a Jewish band, as if Zion with a merry saxophone had turned its colony to a more profitable celestial port. Boys

and girls and wrinkled folk move about inside with solemn legs, for the dance is now of a stiff and paralytic dignity. When a flirtation flourishes most warmly cheek to cheek the blood seems lifted from the feet and one must suppose that the mighty engine of the heart, throbbing with hotter local matters, can spare but a cool exhaust to swing the legs.

"—ladies of protective plainness"

Outside upon the curb the Salvation Army pounds a pious drum, and ladies of protective plainness sing of a fair Jerusalem to pluck our happy souls from hell. There is usually a speech that I might call a sermon; but the tambourines fret for action, and I can catch only now and then a word of warning that some day I shall be burned in oil until my sins are purged away. The gutter for a quarter of

a mile is parked with motors; and from every cross street a throng issues to our excitement, nor heeds the rolling of salvation's distant drum. There is something in the uproar that is cousin to the side-show of a circus and, with a barker at each door and a gentleman to eat nails upon a platform, I would think that Ringling had come among us.

Except for the circus, that still lingers to our time, the movie has swept away all its cheaper competition. What has become of the dime museum for which children begged upon a holiday? One of these shows invited me in youth to look at Napoleon in his dusty uniform and to share the progress of the Queen of Sheba. For a season, until she journeyed to other cities, a wicked Messalina of pasty beauty won our hearts; and I still think that history has dealt unfairly with so sweet and pink a creature. And there was General Grant smoking a black cigar, and Salome of a more modest veil and ankle than our modern opera employs. Music machines offered tubes to be inserted in the ears lest the sound escape to those who had not paid their nickel. Through eyeholes we peeped at historic pictures—the Battle of Gettysburg and Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham—, still life, for the movie had not yet come among us. Some of these required an extra penny and were spiced with scandal. A sign hung above for surest bait, telling us that children must not look. Once, by a lapse of vigilance, I put my

eye to a forbidden shutter and saw, like Peeping Tom, the fair Godiva riding through the streets of Coventry. In the expression of her face I thought I caught a likeness to a schoolmate, and I worshiped her henceforth in secret across the classroom. And I recall a performance of trained fleas, with a marvelous sleight of hand by a professor in yellow coat with his honest sleeves rolled above his elbow. It was our ambition for a week to hide the kitten in a hat and puzzle the family after dinner by our magic.

And cycloramas have fallen out of date, with their dark tunnel and winding stairs and the flash of Babylon above. To this glory of the ancient world how dingy seemed the street outside! How sodden were the mottoes on our classroom wall—Happy is as happy does! to be copied seven times in chalk for whispering—how dull was this sour virtue in the oriental glitter of sin and joy! Certain figures of the foreground, I recall, were actual puppets of three dimensions; yet they blended so ingeniously into the flat paint of the circular canvas that it was a trick to find the joint. I used to look hard for the hanging gardens, which I had thought were held like a bird cage on a chain, and, when it appeared that they were but a solid terrace on a stone abutment, it shook my credulity of other Sunday teaching.

Now and then, also, a mechanical village was set up in a vacant store to tempt our nickel. I

know a store that was in turn a haberdashery, a book auction, a clockwork village, a monkey show and a restaurant—with an odor that was a blend of cage and oven, and dulled the sharpest appetite. But in earlier days a train in tireless circle had crossed a trestle, and a boat had steamed upon a river and tunneled back for another trip. Stiff persons made of iron walked in slots with unbending legs, children went to class at the sounding of the school bell and a cataract leaped in shallow trickle from a cliff above. An attendant with dull mechanic eye took our payment at the door, but he turned his back upon the show and teased us by strange indifference to the glory of his stage.

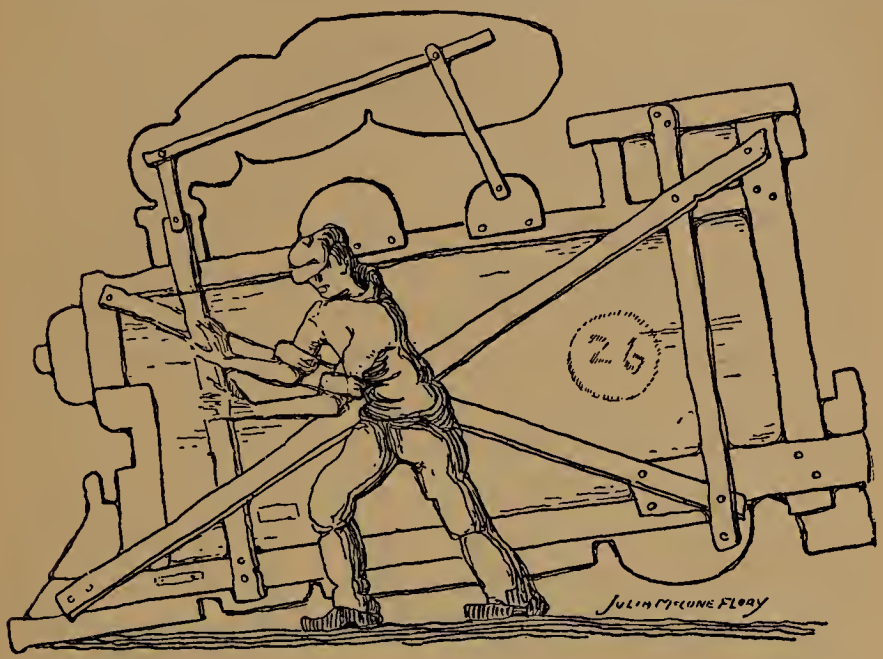
And what has become of the old-time melodrama? We used to go into the theater by a cheap side door that was called the Family Entrance, as if thrift like charity begins at home. And then we climbed with clattering feet on a wooden staircase to the gloom of the topmost gallery and sat expectant until the ring of gas lamps was lighted in the dome. If quick enough to get front seats we leaned across the rail to look at the wealthy pit where persons who were not in families sat, and we dropped our programs to guess at their perverse descent. Or chewing gum with sweetness lost could be shaken off the tongue and was surer at a mark.

Actors in those older days knew that their best

admirers sat above and any phrase of greater villainy or challenge was thrown direct at us. If a will were discovered in a final act that would restore the ancestral towers of Vere de Vere it was us—we—us it was who were the first to get the news. The pit was lukewarm to the heroine's distress but we to a man stood in her defense. I wonder if ladies in yellow curls are as beautiful as once, if legs in silk are quite so pink. My heart still throbs to a little girl with skirts that fluttered to her knees who ran among us with a reprieve to save her lover from the scaffold. For a month I dreamed of valiant deeds that would uplift me to her glance.

Has *The Dark Secret* gone off the boards forever? Where is now the sawmill with a hero bound upon a log and the villain hissing through his teeth? Where is the *cheeild* that Goldilocks once demanded in tears upon her knees? The anæmic rascals of our present stage would burst if stuffed so full of evil. There is not now a waistcoat button that could hold the spleen. The faithful horse clacking in the wings! To what elysium of fragrant clover has he gone? "Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison, . . . can touch him further." And the pasteboard locomotive rushing at the open switch! *Foiled again! Curse you, Vincent Marmaduke!* Or that other scene where a tree waved its branches above a dizzy gulch! Bloodhounds! A heroine swooning in rosy paint! The lover

clambers to the top with his awkward burden. And then the leap to safety on the india-rubber trunk! And who was the lady of that golden play who swung from the clapper of a bell to hush the signal that would fetch the villain? This



"—the pasteboard locomotive rushing at the open switch!"

was a moment that surpassed all clockwork villages and the canvas of brilliant Babylon.

When London Sleeps had an actual tank to hold the Thames, and into its inky stream the hero was pitched, tied hand and foot. Would nothing save him? We leaned forward from the dome of heaven like eager but ineffectual angels. But the heroine dived from a passing tug (her father was

the captain), and a spot-light was thrown on the river in order that we might see her struggle with the waves. *Sweetheart, I have loved you all these years.* But the bass viol turned his back upon their dripping kiss and sawed an indifferent tune, for to him such rescues were a commonplace. He had lived so much with heroes that he yawned at danger. Nor can I forget the smell that rose from these ten-cent seats to which chill poverty had pinched us. After the play, in a prosperous season of fresh allowance, we walked to Conrad's soda fountain and on a line of stools against the counter we took our foamy chocolate through a straw and revived in gossip the excitement of the plot. Could we only have dropped the heroine a hint she would have thwarted the villain at the start.

Doubtless time has brought its compensations to present youth; but to my jaded sense, when once I have passed the glitter of the street, I find the movie but a dull performance despite its improved mechanics; and the actual locomotive that pitches from a trestle is but a faded child of its pasteboard grandsire that was wrecked once with a horrid clatter in the wings. Nor can one who dreams of the golden ladies of the past fall in love with a close-up of purple lips. Hollywood has been advertised too grossly, and when I see a beauty that seems of fairest purity upon the screen my mind reverts to the black reports of midnight parties and drunken riot.

And then, because of thrift that requires two performances of an evening, I usually take my seat when the movie is half over. I see first the later acts and must then sit through an organ solo, a film of jest and the Pathé news before I am permitted to learn the starting of the plot. Predestination points not with so sure and merciless a finger as myself when the play begins its second round, for already I know that virtue triumphs. But arriving in the middle of the piece, it is sometimes ten minutes before I am certain which the hero is; and chiefly I commend those plays where he displays an incessant virtue for my instruction. A villain, also, to win my understanding, must show a frequent twitching of his black mustache and a wicked rolling of the eyes. Any barber whose careless shears snip close the upper lip would confuse the plot, and if an author choose a blond to do his dirty work I pass the evening in a muddle. I am likely to cheer when he steals the pearls and draw black looks upon me from better students of the silver drama. Once, to my deep humiliation, I dropped an unnecessary tear because a man, who had falsely persuaded me he was the hero, drew a revolver and killed himself. It was only when his rival advanced with an air of unmistakable virtue and took the lady in his arms that I saw that justice had been done and that these two were marked to be happy ever after.

Movies whenever possible should be given with-

out change of costume. Even in actual life, being a bit nearsighted, I am so dull that often I do not recognize an acquaintance on the slightest changing of a feather; so why should I be held to shrewder recognition in a movie of entire strangers. I have become accustomed, as an instance, to a rascal's horsy checkered suit. He should wear it to the end so that I shall not need to nudge my neighbor to keep me straight against confusion. This stricture, however, carried into women's clothing, is so hard on an actress's vanity that I despair of reform. And again the close-up bothers me. I have been tricked to a belief in a lady's beauty; when suddenly her face pops up close to mine. Of course I do not know her. It is but a tribute to her former comeliness to deny our acquaintance outright. Did you but know, my dear, how daubed you are with ugly paint, you would have kept to a safer distance and held me in fair illusion.

I am impatient, too, when the plot strikes back to show how a present problem was handled in antiquity—how to-day's passion is but an echo of Nineveh or Rome. I recall a screen version of Barrie's *Admirable Crichton* in which Henley's line, "When I was a King in Babylon and you were a Christian slave" delayed the play for a good fifteen minutes in order that we might see the heroine, dressed now in Mesopotamian tunic, spurning her lover's dishonest proposal and throwing

herself to a pair of vicious alligators. These beasts had just devoured a previous slave and now licked their chops up and down the slimy tank to whet their appetite and ours. A million dollars was spent in hanging gardens and a torture chamber before we could get on with the shipwreck and the lonely island of our narrower present plot. If hatred is the cue we must endure a dirty stretch of ancient cruelty. Or if love is the evening theme there comes a close-up of Antony and Cleopatra kissing in the moonlight of the Nile to convince us that love is an eternal passion.

It is amazing that in a time when romance seems banished from our lives—when books are starkly realistic and the spoken play does not give us even a hearty kiss to mark the final curtain—when lavender and lace are left to aged folk—when the moon turns green with disappointment and hides its head in clouds—it is amazing that all sentiment should be crowded to the movie and be there depicted with a sickly warmth that would shame the ringlets and the hoop skirt of other days. Is the screen a laggard from the past, or a prophet of the future when rosy lips will again demand their tribute?

And the close-up, as I have said, has its defect. There are few faces pretty enough to stand the perusal of the camera three feet off the nose. In private life, among my comelier acquaintance, I find no disadvantage in such proximity; but the

paint of the stage rests too heavily on the cheek. If the methods of the movie continue to infect our theater, presently a runway will be constructed, as in the Winter Garden, to the footlights of our spoken drama and the audience will be invited to step forward and inspect their hero's agony at nearer range, with perhaps a powdered footman at the better plays, to keep the procession from jamming on the runway.

They tell me that the writing of legends for the movie is now of greater profit than the authorship of books, and that the producers keep a score of brawny fellows with thick red beards to compose appropriate sentiments. *And here in the great clean hills his wounds were healed.* We are now prepared to see our hero going forth with honest shovel to still the throbbing of his wounded heart. And she—she has spent her lonely years as a nurse in Baloochistan until at last she learns his innocence. And so, in the glory of the mountains there dawns a happier day and she is folded to his arms—before the comic cartoons are run. It is a relief from such honeyed sentiment to see a foolish hunter swallowed by a bear—with a lump of indigestion running down the creature's spine.

I find the movie too choppy. Why must I be whisked intermittently from the torture chamber and the alligators to behold the soldiers clattering to the rescue? If concurrent action is necessary there should be two screens and a double picture.

On one side a lady struggles from an unwelcome kiss, and in the parallel picture at the other eye we should see our honest horsemen speeding in the mountains, climbing now the castle walls, beating down the guard, running in the corridor. And then there is a great crash at the prison door as the two scenes blend to one. This method of multiple entertainment is successful in a three-ring circus where we are given a continuous choice of dancing bears and ladies in twinkling tights on a high trapeze. The movie must not confess itself a laggard.

I am told that our younger generation knows all the players of the screen by sight and reputation, and that they search the bills to find their favorite. On rival merits they put a fine distinction. This is a sharpness of perception that I lack. To me it is a picture and not a play; and if the scene be laid in pretty country of wind and cloud and mountain, if it hold some hazard of excitement or show a storm by sea, I care not who gestures dumbly in the parts. I go to the movie as I go to dinner—without thought whether it be halibut or chicken. For Charlie Chaplin or other high celebrity I care not the snapping of a finger. In a mood for lazy entertainment of an evening I turn in where the lights are brightest and the show bill is of gayest color.

And now the play has worked around to the end of the second act and the pictures bear the familiar

look of when I entered. My tail-front cycle is complete. I yawn, slap up the seat and come into the yellow glitter of the street where the ladies of a fair Jerusalem beat their pious tambourines to save my sleepy soul from hell.

"—to save my sleepy soul from hell"

"—I am of quite a mind to be an actor"

A Spear in Cæsar's Army

I AM of quite a mind to be an actor—not professionally, of course, but to dabble as an amateur. Nor am I wholly without experience. In college I was Iago in a merry skit with song and dance, and William Jennings Bryan—villains, both of them. More recently I played the Pope in Marlowe's *Faustus* and was clouted on the head. *Faustus hits him a box on the ear* was the stage direction, but I was assailed with a vigor that seemed to square a grudge. My part had been cut to five little speeches—*My Lord of Lorrain, wilt please you draw near?* Bits like that!—but I fretted for a month, and walked about and sat in crowded cars with moving lips to get them pat. Finally Helen of Troy, hearing me mutter at rehearsal as I wandered in study among the flies, in mercy held my book until I was perfect

in my cues; and the touch of this romance is a pleasant recollection. For briefest moment, perched on the Emperor's throne behind the scenes, I was Faustus's happy rival; and I am prepared, if it be necessary, to launch another thousand ships.

On our opening night, in a lumber room beneath the stage that I shared with Gluttony and Belzebub —vile company for my holy cloth, or was it a Presbyterian jest of our Scotch director?—on our opening night I dressed myself in a sheet that had been cut to a priestly robe, and hung about my neck a wealth of Medicean jewels. The great ruby that sparkled on my stomach had begun life as a red gumdrop in a candy shop across the way—three to the penny from a pail—and it was suspended on a chain that seemed borrowed from the plumbing. I had bought a box of make-up and after much smudging and erasure I satisfied myself that I was every inch a Borgia. As I stood in the wings, nervously waiting for my cue, I kept repeating to myself that I was a wicked Alexander. It is this communion with oneself, I had been told, that drives acting inward from the surface and stamps it with reality. I was upset, therefore, at the final curtain, to be told by Lechery—a modest lady despite her drafty costume—that I had made a fine success as a genial and lovable old pope. It was my gentler self, sticking through my grease-paint, that spoiled my villainy. My sly and cunning squint had

passed for sleepiness. Nero, as he fiddled to burning Rome, would not have been more crushed at a compliment of domestic virtue. So I yielded to necessity and played him thereafter soft and senile without change of paint or inflection.

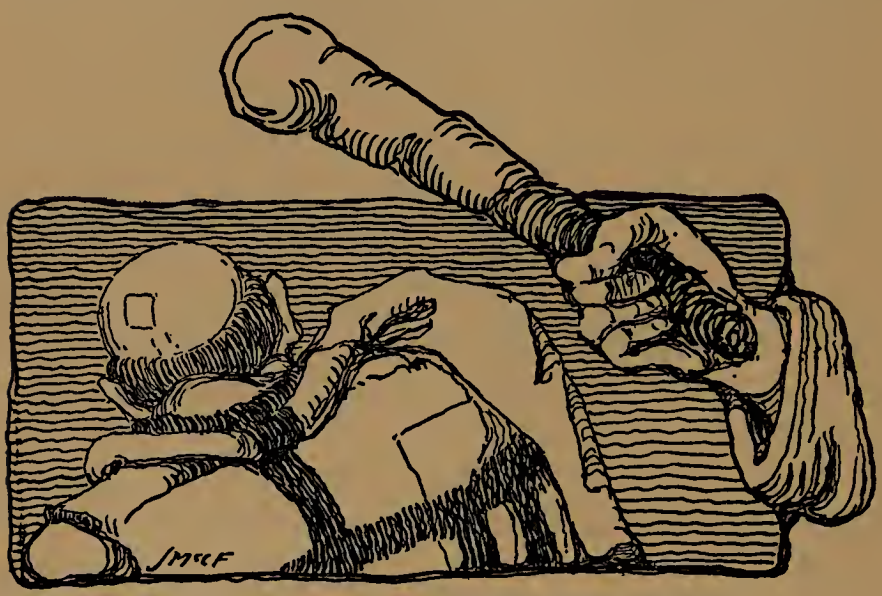
Our play ran for a dozen nights, and presently I was expert in climbing inside my sheet. There was some trivial difference of safety pins to mark it fore and aft, but it was a pretty trick to set it right before I attached my faithful gumdrop and hung the plumbing around my neck. I wore real sandals, whereas my cardinals appeared in woolen socks alone. Belzebub was a hurried actor who always came late, and he played the devil among my paints; but Gluttony and I were leisurely actors who arrived at our dressing room an hour before the entrance cue to saunter through our make-up. Gluttony was widely read in Shakespeare—a weakness of my own—and regularly we tossed quotations back and forth for the other to name the play. A great electric fan sucked air from our impromptu room to renew the auditorium—a defective arrangement that we altered when we had the money—and once it caught my shirt and was persuading it to go above and see the play.

I acted next the old house servant in *The New York Idea*, and carried my napkin with such an easy and accustomed air that five separate ladies living on the Heights—our richest suburb—

offered me a job. It was my pants. My coat and waistcoat were my own that I wear to weddings, but they were soiled by the company they kept below. I selected these pants with meticulous care. At first trousers had been urged upon me at eight dollars for the set—modest stripes—but I had that kind at home in moth-balls. Then finally in a humble shop at the top of a flight of stairs—a dirty entrance, with quack doctors vending their sudden cures on each riser of the steps—the kind of building that pawnbrokers love and locksmiths haunt—here it was I bought a pair of pants at a dollar and forty-nine cents a leg. And it occurs to me, as now I sit in meditation, that a man crippled on a crutch and wooden peg might take these merchants at their word and supply his widowed limb with special thrift. The broken waistband might prove a puzzle, but the goodwife could contrive a belt all round from scraps of cloth. It would thwart the ancient saying that two can live as cheaply as one. Do one-legged men, when they purchase shoes, never find a complementary cripple to go along and divide the pair? There is thought in this to save the purse—but I digress. My pants were of hard cotton and of a pattern that had a humor of its own. There was no great art in my Thomas, but I had seventeen entrances to be made always in the nick of time, and I lay them against Hamlet's comparative leisure.

Next, warming to my success, I played the referee in *The Admirable Bashville*, as I am told, with almost a touch of genius. The author had clearly intended mine to be but an inferior part and from start to finish only one line was thrown to me. For this glorious moment I saved myself—like a bassoon that gathers wind for that briefest moment in the symphony when his single note peeps above the din—and during a clock-tick I was immortal. I seem to remember that famous actors have sometimes made their start by playing a neglected rôle with such persuasive gusto that they have swept the stage and dimmed the central lovers. Mansfield's Baron Chevrial and the elder Sothern's Dundreary were subsidiary parts by which their actors burst to dazzling fame. At the end of our second act there was a prize fight—a general rough-and-tumble—and I was now so intoxicated by the gallery's applause that I laid about me with utmost vigor and smashed the fellow who had clouted me in *Faustus*. It was my humor even to lift a performer by his trousers' slack and bear him like old Anchises from the stage. After the curtain fell the director complimented me on the volume with which I had given my single line—the loudest utterance, he said, that our theater had ever heard—but he warned me that on a second performance it would not be necessary to wreck the scene.

My costume was a stub of a cigar and a loud striped sweater that pinched my stomach and heightened my vulgar figure. Its wide yellow band was wrapped around me like an elastic cure



"—who had clouted me in *Faustus*"

for fatness, and I fear that it spoiled my reputation. My attempts at writing, it seems, among those ignorant of my coarser fiber, have lifted me to a half-clerical position—something in the Church of England line with high-buttoned waistcoat and sober gaiters. A correspondent once thought that I lived in a Surrey cottage with roses climbing on the wall. I have even been addressed as professor and have been invited to appear before clubs on heavy literary topics—Milton and things like that. Our local Woman's

Club, and it should know better, has put me on its list to sit at lunch with celebrities who come among us, and I have awarded prizes to school children. And now in my home-town all this is tumbled into ruin. Indeed, before the run of *Bashville* was done, I received a letter anonymously in a lady's hand with protest that I should so debase myself. Mr. Pickwick, when his fat friend Winkle appeared in bulging tights at Mrs. Leo Hunter's garden party, was not more shocked. Henceforth from my essays, she lamented, the incense of the English church was gone, the wall of roses and the quiet cloister of peaceful life. Against a green and yellow sweater an open scandal would have seemed to her but a pale offense. I know now why generals are painted with commanding gesture on rearing horses, rather than in their homely slippers at the fire. But it is just as well, perhaps, to expose at once my meaner nature and puncture a fair balloon.

So you see that I have had my glorious moments behind the footlights. I have not been content to be an alarm from within, a horse trotting in the wings, or to bear a spear in Cæsar's army.

Yet my dazed wonder at the mechanics of the stage has not wholly rubbed away. Our theater, even with its gallery, can squeeze together no more than two hundred and thirty persons. The building was once a church, erected small to fit the neighborhood's lukewarm need of heaven. We

bought it, swept away its pulpit and dwarfed the tiny auditorium by a great brick stage across the holier end. Falstaff, hereafter, should preach to us. The pews were saved for the seating at secular entertainment, and a window at the end was painted with creatures that we accept as cupids—for one must not look with too sharp analysis at our contemporary art. Later we added dressing rooms, a room for rehearsal, a scene-dock and an office. In still another room we pitched up the roof with heavy beams, put a tall window against the street and built a fireplace for friendly gathering. This is our greenroom, and if its outline suggests a chapel we worship here a less exacting god of mirth and tragedy.

We are amateur in spirit, with professional direction and nucleus to control the production and take many of the rôles that weigh too heavy for our slim experience. Our organization is rather like that of a club and its decision rests on a quarterly meeting and a board. We have been told—and I lay it not entirely to flattery—that our theater stands well toward the top of several hundred theaters of its kind scattered across the country. Our actors are not confined within the club, for anyone who can win our director's credulity and confidence may take a part, and we have tapped the city from east to west. We have won an audience without much begging and our twelve productions of the winter play two hundred nights

"—vaults of a newer Gothic"

or more to crowded houses. Our income somewhat tops expense. Were New York not so entirely on an island it would hear of us.

But I like the stage best when its scenery has been swept away, when the lights are out and it rises to dim obscurity into vaults of a newer Gothic that the centuries have not yet touched. The dust that dances at the loophole of a window is an incense to a merrier god, and the mystery of his worship mounts within the gloom. The bridge is dark, but I see the wheels and levers that flooded once a moonlit garden with romance. At yonder canvas wall daubed with trailing vines lovers have confessed their passion. Here is the trap from which Yorick's jesting skull was tossed. Here is the window through which Faustus gazed upon the stars until the sky grew red for his destruction. The platform of our prize fight was daïs for Hamlet's throne, the room of Richard's silken state. A door to a dirty dungeon, gilded now with cupids serves a naughty farce. Above me in silent darkness hang the walls of Babylon and Rome—the balcony from which Juliet sighed her soul to the glistening stars. Down these steps, flattened against the wall, Francesca will descend to Paolo's arms, and on yonder table a dozen sequent drunkards have rapped their merry cups. From that stanchion ropes arise to hold the castle of a king, and from that iron ladder that disappears in darkness the moon was fixed in place. And so, like

a factory girl who reads of Dukes and sudden fortune, I stand in make-believe; and my memory, that treads outside a common path of duller fancy, speaks here with golden monarchs and far-off beauty. This dim stage with its broken hint and dislocation is like a poet's brain, and from its rubble he builds a gorgeous dream.

And so, I repeat, I have a mind to be an actor. Already I fatten myself on sweets in the hope that when I ripen into autumn I shall be picked for Falstaff or Toby Belch.

"—the mountain which has laid its weight upon him"

Beyond the Mountains

IT is in the returning sunlight when the tunnel has been passed that one sees the mountain which has laid its weight upon him; and as he journeys now in open valleys he beholds across his shoulder the awful range and the black shaft that released him at the base.

And so, after acute illness when the pain is done, there is a time of peaceful convalescence when a contented pillow is world enough. The burden of darker days is past, and the hours run by, as it were, under an easy morphia of clouded rest. One lets slip in drowsy joy everything that lies beyond his door, for it offers as yet no problem for his brain and muscle; and the figures that cross his window are the puppets of an unfamiliar life. Market cart and butcher, the customary traffic of his neighbors—he sees them all with

separate and alien eye like a man returned from banishment.

But mental suffering digs more deeply, and more stubbornly it resists a cure. It is a mightier tunnel that stifles the spirit and the courage and the heart. It is well for him who endures its blacker weight if love surrounds him, if a close routine of work compels his hours or poverty drives him on a forced and necessary path. A load for the shoulders is the brain's release. Nor do its imprisoning walls fall off upon a flash and yield to smiling valleys, for at best there succeeds an intermittent daylight and a transitory shadow lingers into months. Then finally, let us hope, a season returns when his heart lightens and the foul entanglement is loosened from his brain. A persistent sunlight now revives him and he beholds the stubborn cliffs that have smothered him so long.

This is true for all of us—doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief—and the candles of the twilight that ends our years must reveal even in happy lives the scar of grief and disappointment.

The experience of every player on the stage must hold at least an infrequent tragedy in which he acts with semblance of gayety when his heart is raw with sorrow. We have seen actors capering in a comic part with the seal of death upon them; or when lights are out they have gone from a barren stage to sit by a bed of suffering. It was

only lately that I saw a silly fellow grinning at the footlights whose wife died next day at the surgeon's knife, and behind his farce was a secret cry of pain. An old plot, retold by Thackeray and many writers since, concerns the clown who sought a physician to cure his melancholy and was sent to see himself. And this stifled grief of the player is but a sample of the world. A mother smiles at illness lest her lament bring peril, and our walks are filled with those whose gayety is but a scab upon the heart. They watch their own antic as in a mirror and paint their faces with jesting mirth to conceal the lines of sorrow.

There is something in this that is more than trite. Let any man who bears a burden put a searching question to his neighbor and he will learn that their separate burdens hang on an even scale; and a street that grins in public conceals its bitterness and grief. A man must lend a smile to a sober world and take his usury in coin of laughter. There is wholesome contagion in an honest jest. My friend F—— tells me of an old woman wasting of a desperate illness who was visited by one of those gracious persons who carry infectious mirth. When she was about to leave, the poor old soul lifted herself on her pillow and marking with her bony finger a good ten inches on the coverlet, told her visitor that she was "worth a pill as long as that"; for she had drawn the curtain of a somber room and let the warm sunlight in.

I have scant interest in those who spread their plague of suffering to the street by whining of their own distress, who confess openly their disordered lungs and stomach, who itemize their inside tubing, who buttonhole an acquaintance to recount their frightful symptoms. By contrast the sharp gossip of one's neighbors is innocence itself, and it is more merciful to wreck a doubtful reputation than to share a diseased liver with a friend. If I ask such a man casually in passing of a morning how he is, the question is but a polite form of greeting and he should not take me at my word and tell me of his sleepless night. It were better manners, despite the truth, if he pronounced himself top-hole and passed me out a jest. I have heard invalids boast mournfully of a skipping heart, as if they possessed a shiny pearl.

Nor have I tolerance with those who deal in tragedy as a trade and sell their grief in books to get a living. A plague of sorrow follows closely on their pen, and I would have their inkwells smashed for the public health. I am prepared to lay out my money for commodity of laughter and to be a spendthrift for merry entertainment, but I tighten to a miser in the purchase of another's gloom. When Beatrice and Benedict are led with a jest to church I could hope that their offspring might have turned their mirth to writing. The progeny of Hamlet is too large. I could wish that Falstaff had married his merry wife of Wind-

sor and had set himself to raise a numerous family. It is natural, perhaps, that youth should deal in romantic tears and sob in purple verse, for it is excess of happiness that sends them on an un-

"—I could wish that Falstaff had married his merry wife of Windsor"

known path to gloomy kingdoms; but maturity knows better the sorrow of its street and should offer us a happy page with no more than a sober thread for contrast.

Too many masterpieces have been filled with decay, suffering and abnormality. The greatest

music has told of sadness. Poetry at its top has been packed with grief. Our most persuasive actors are mimics of tragic life, as if happiness were of cheaper price. The world has no need of added tragedy; and pen, brush, paint and ink should be solicited to heal the sorrow of our neighbors. We have most need of a comic genius, for the stock of gladness is less than its demand. A great roar of honest laughter around the earth—Cervantes come again—might even help to mend the quarrel of nations. Surely on us who profess comedy as our vocation there lies a debt to deal entirely in our customary wares with commodity of mirth. And so in all humility, in a world that thinks too much that beauty runs with grief alone, we little fellows of the pen must maintain with merriment a brighter vision and train our composition to a smooth and gracious jest.

For comedy is by no necessity a cheap and dirty product. Its smile may run as true to life as any somber tragedy and its genial paragraph may be packed with as high a beauty. We have intrusted comedy too long to mountebanks and let a slapstick fill its definition. Our hours of suffering, no doubt, need interpretation; but it is in happiness that we are most alive and we require a poet for its just expression. In actual life we know that suffering wears an ugly look, yet we allow it like a stormy cloud to fill the heaven of our art. Good comedy is scarce in books and on the

stage. A gracious phrase describes our tears, but we leave our gayer hours to the noisy laughter of a clown.

And so I like to think of comedy in what is perhaps its primary meaning. My dictionary answers to my fumbling finger that it may come from two Greek words—*village* and *to sing*. It was once, therefore, a village festival of song—a time of gladness, touched no doubt with buffoonery and cheaper jest, but in the main an occasion when life was expressed in happiness and beauty. And henceforth when the word rises in my mind I shall think of simpler living where grief is lost for

"—where men and women dance and sing together"

a time in joy, where men and women dance and sing together, where merriment is not a gross and vulgar jest. And I shall think of sunny fields and the gay ribbons of a Maypole dance, of songs that are sung in chorus, of labor that is put aside for holiday; and then of twilight with candles set about, and open friendly doors and fires of contented invitation.

"—without exercise, massage, drug, or special diet"

Me Too!

I WAS reading last night the advertisements in a periodical devoted to fiction of the hotter sort—*Throbs of Passion*—and I am struck with remorse at the opportunities I have neglected.

It seems evident from even a casual study of these pages that anyone, however plain, can grow to dazzling beauty. Comeliness, it appears is nature's perfect law, and we need only know the truth to dispel the blemishes of error. And the assistance offered is all so free of mercenary taint. No money is demanded for the possession of these secrets. One has only to be of open mind and to print his name legibly on the dotted line. It is amazing how such a galaxy of generosity and wisdom can have come together to bring comfort to our diverse infirmities.

As I shaved this morning I looked at myself in the mirror with new curiosity to see if perhaps my own beauty needed mending. If the two million readers of these throbs of passion prove alert to profit by these beauty secrets so cheaply priced, I must not be the only laggard to perfection. I wiped away the soap for better study. I am reasonably well acquainted with my face head-on as I meet it in collision with the glass, but now for complete diagnosis I twisted myself into profile. I even put up an extra glass upon a slant so that I could see myself like a stranger from behind. The results were surprising and disconcerting. I am not at all the kind of person I thought I was. Why has no one ever told me? My features are not sharp cut, as I had hoped, like the heroes of the stories that one reads. I have not the piercing but kindly eye that I had wished and my nose jogs upward at the end as if it sniffed the ceiling.

But these defects can be remedied. A hundred helpful hints are thrown me without a cent to pay. *Throbs of Passion*, with hospitable arms outspread, comes trotting to the rescue. I am embarrassed among a wealth of sudden cures.

It seems, as an instance, that a prima donna of international reputation, traveling lately in Siam, was told in confidence by a native priest a simple method by which the ladies of that land preserve the slimness of their figure. This method,

she confesses, was so easy that at first she was incredulous; but, having lost a pound a day for several months—she must have sung in Wagner and started stout—"without exercise, massage, drug, or special diet" she was won at last to confidence and sought the priest's permission to spread his secret to the world. And by great good fortune the holy man consented, provided that it be a free offering to the west as Siam's mite toward happiness and beauty. The prima donna, in proof of her recovered beauty, shows a picture of herself in charming one-piece bathing suit silhouetted against the mountain of her former bulk. Furthermore, in sheer gratitude, she has written the progress of her shrinkage, and a limited number of these booklets, printed in three colors with a handsome photo on the cover, are offered free to those who apply at once. I have, to my regret, delayed a week and I suppose that already I am too late. And yet, even as I bounce and blow with unprofitable fat, I like to think of that good old priest in far-off Siam, where every waist fits Venus' girdle, as he whispers his secret in confessional to this musical dumpling of international reputation. It is generosity like his that goes so far to make ours a better world.

It is quite amazing, however, that these marvelous cures are always discovered in out-of-the-way places that are off the railroad. Ohio here, beneath

my nose, although it raises a pretty crop of corn and hay and wheat, is strangely barren of potent herb and root. Our vines and fruitage are of just an ordinary sort, without that touch of magic that marks the Orient. We have recipes enough in our homely cupboards, but they confine themselves to the curing of a sneeze and the easing of a cramp amidships. For beauty we must look afield. It is the rare plant of Baloochistan, distilled to costly drops, that brings a freshness to the jaded eye and brow. The dingleberries of Somaliland are imported at vast expense to wipe the freckle from our western faces. It is the tears of crocodiles, offered by a yogi scorning gold, that smooths our wrinkles and lifts a baggy cheek. Mud from Egypt—five dollars a can in plain wrappers (a special price for introduction)—is a certain aid to beauty, and priests neglect their beads to throw a remedy across the world. There are persons of stunted outlook who reject these miracles, but I prefer to think that God works in devious ways his wonders to perform.

A new head of hair is offered to me—any shade in reason, for I have only to check the color of my eyes inside a square—in three weeks with a guarantee of money back if the sprouting is delayed. We are the Old Reliable, I am assured. Try us when others fail!

My ears, also, that now lay out too eagerly against the wind, can be smoothed to perfect

beauty in a fortnight. It is nature's remedy. A strap fastened on at bedtime to hold them flat against the pillow! Or perhaps I have a crooked spine and must decline all evening parties and sit by a lonely fire. I need not despair hereafter of partners to a foxtrot. I have only to put on a tricky little corset, pull the strings to a comfortable fit, and be accepted at a dance. It is as easy as a coat. No one needs to know that I am wearing it. Willowy to movement! Steel ribs! Ounces, not pounds! Genuine silk garters attached in pink or blue! Write for a booklet of a thousand testimonials from grateful patients!

Bowlegs! How Do You Look in a Bathing Suit? Ridiculous, of course. But why endure the jeers of the beach? I have cured a million worse than you. The secret of Apollo! Write for handsome catalogue, with a picture of the Venus de Milo for framing on the cover. Give circumference of waist and length of limb! Department 2795X! These great corporations for benevolent healing always have so many departments, and if one were to get the room-number wrong, the letter would wander lost in a mile of prophylactic corridors. I wonder what is cured in those other two thousand seven hundred and ninety-four departments.

Old Doctor Phuzzy cures knock-knees. K. K. K.! Printed instructions by mail! A dollar a leg, and for premium to mark a centenary there will be sent a 49-piece set of genuine hand-painted Dresden

china with choice of rose pattern or elephants. Initial in old English, surrounded by a gold wreath!

"I have cured a million worse than you"

Clubfoot or flat chest! Nothing easier and not a cent to pay until a cure is shown! We stimu-

late the yeast cells! Doctor Smouts, once surgeon to the King of Bosnia, employs a corps of able assistants. Electric sign! Two flights up! Open all night!

And how I wish I had but a single leg! Bilburry's fiber limb is soothing to the stump—strong, neat, light, guaranteed for five years! Easy payments! Ball-bearing joints! Run! Skip! Leap! Dance!

As for the upturned nose that I discovered this morning in the glass, I blush to think how long I have neglected it when the remedy is so simple. I might have been handsome years ago and been a merry dog at parties. For a trifling payment—a camel or two a day—a harness will be mailed to me, held merely by a button at the rear. No hook needed! Just a simple little button! I am required to wear the harness only in the privacy of my own home and it will not interfere with my daily occupation. Self-adjustable! No screws! No metal parts! Gentle, firm and comfortable! It shapes while you sleep! Write to-day and surprise your wife at breakfast! Read our booklet entitled "Happy Days Ahead."

But ladies have the best of it. Do you wish your face lifted by a specialist lately arrived from Bucharest who was employed by a certain famous queen of the movies just before she snared the heart and fortune of the handsome King of Bessarabia? Do you attract the regard of men? Madame X—— will tell you how she won a dozen

lovers, and held them until she passed her eightieth year. A simple lotion to be rubbed on night and morning with the fingers! Or, which is mother and which is daughter? No home should be without a dollar package of our Bedtime Cream. Two sizes! All druggists! Insist upon the genuine! You can't look well in evening clothes unless you have slim ankles. Our rubber stockings may be worn without discovery beneath the finest silk. Or again! The secret of charm! Be every bit a woman! No pads! Men do not like a dummy! These alluring offers make me regret my sex.

I can become an architect by applying myself each evening for fifteen happy minutes. Or a mining engineer! Get the Big Job! I have only to check the professions I desire and mail the slip to a group of philanthropic gentlemen who conduct a correspondence school. The advertisement always carries a little story drawn from life—the record of a grateful pupil—recounting his wife's surprise when he first brought home his larger pay envelope. "Only to think, Gwendoline," he says, "it all came about because I happened to see that advertisement. Do you remember how you urged me to give my evenings to happy study?"

And cartoonists get big pay. Fifteen thousand a year is a paltry trifle for "WORK THAT IS REALLY PLAY." You copy down a little picture—a cow sometimes, sometimes a funny horse—and if you do it faithfully without spilling a blot,

you get the course at half price to reward your extra genius. They want bright men like you. Draw pictures for the papers and own a motor car. Pupils sell their drawings before the term is finished.

Or for two dollars and ninety-eight cents—certainly a bargain—the secrets of hypnotism will be exposed. You can plant thoughts in others and win admiration, love, money and fame.

No one should neglect to buy a Mystic Egyptian Luck Ring. Fortune, happiness, success in love and business come to those who send one dollar and forty-five cents. Be the envy of your street! Useful as graduation, wedding and birthday gifts! Money back, if not satisfied!

There is an incessant demand for persons who can paint lamp shades and sofa pillows. A complete outfit with paint and brushes is offered for a contemptible dollar, and a book is thrown in free that is filled with original designs, including the pansy-chain that is now so popular. Or one can learn to be a detective at home by easy instruction in finger prints. Earn a thousand dollars by a simple method in detection! Your picture in the evening papers! Outfit free!

Interior decorators are in great demand. In a half dozen lessons at home—at home! Everyone so loves to stay at home—you can pick up on the side, without giving up your job at the gas works, ten thousand dollars. The whole secret

is in the blending of colors. Write for our Magic Wheel of Opposites—the secret of complements—fool proof—you have but to spin it—it is yours in a handsome box. Start work to-morrow! Upon your own street! Among your neighbors!

And then it seems to be no trick to write a movie. This I have suspected. It explains most of the movies I have seen. But our second maid has got the start of me. It seems that about a week ago she answered one of these tempting advertisements. Back came a questionnaire. Did she find her employment uncongenial? What was her ambition? Did she wish to write a society thriller or a play in the great open spaces of the west? Had she a knack of studying faces, and could she make up stories about the people that she saw? Did she say funny things that raised a laugh? Did she throb for self-expression? She must have filled in these answers with remarkable skill for she won the contest. Out of several thousand papers hers was in the upper ten and she was selected for a free scholarship so that she might climb to fame.

A young man came all the way out from somewhere to congratulate her and offer her a certificate with a gold seal and a picture of the capitol at Albany. The judges, it seems, out of long experience in reading character, had realized that she—she, almost alone of all those aspiring thousands—had prepared a paper that had the true touch of

success for the creative drama of the silver screen. Something—something ineffable had persuaded them, some hidden stroke of genius that duller persons would have missed. Perhaps she set down her commas with the sure vigor of ambition, or crossed the t's with an airy grace that spoke the soul of Shelley struggling out from the ugly circumstance of household tasks. Anyway, here was the award with a gold seal and the judges' signatures to attest her triumph. Like Byron she had awakened famous.

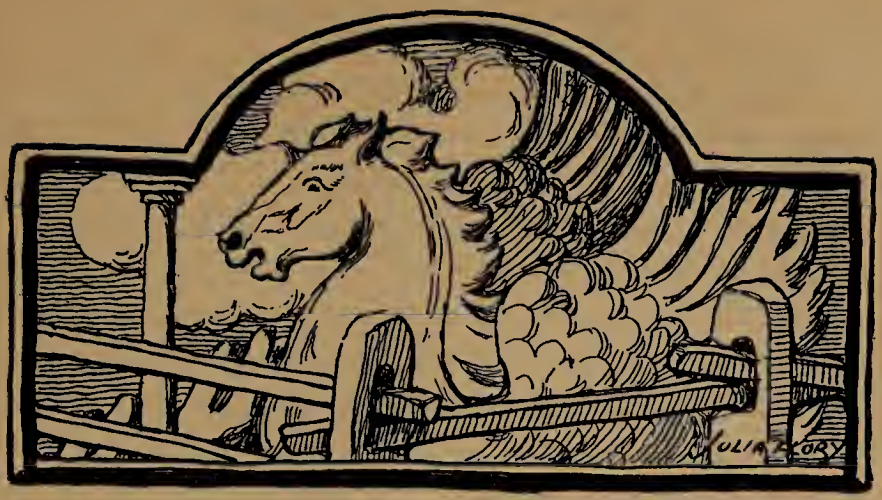
And the scholarship was absolutely free—except for a mere trifle of seventy-five dollars to cover her enrollment. The first picture that she sold would be ten, twenty, thirty, a hundred times that amount. I thought at first I would offer her two hundred dollars for her rights and cheat her of celebrity, but my honesty prevailed. When I hear her now rattling with a dust mop among the bric-a-brac I know that she can remain with us but a little while and that soon the great world of lights and beauty will call her to the throne. I shall always point to Annie's room with pride and keep a scarlet ribbon on the pen that dreamed a masterpiece beneath my roof.

But it is the possibilities in music that tempt me most in my throbs of passion. In two weeks I can learn to play either the ukulele, the pipe organ, the piccolo, the piano, the tuba, the violin, the cello or the saxophone. In two weeks!

I do not know how many there are of these easy instruments, but I am tempted to take a couple of months off and learn to play the whole lot of them. It is done by the aid of a new invention. Little numbers, it seems, are glued on the strings and these correspond with numbers in a textbook. You press your fingers consecutively on the numbers indicated in the lesson and by so doing you learn a tune each evening without knowing one string from another. After only a week of easy concentration, friends call you up at night and ask you to come over *and bring your Sax.* After you have learned *Seeing Nellie Home* and semiclassical music like that, you go on to Brahms and Beethoven. One music school alone has made great artists at high salary of three hundred thousand students. Free folder explains! Colored photo of Galli-Curci! No practicing required! You play at once! Now!

"—Beauty calls me—me—me, too!"

I am, I repeat, struck with remorse at my opportunities neglected. I yearn to play the Sax, to command the love of others by hypnosis, to wipe up a thousand now and then by an easy picture, to write a movie of the clean open spaces of the west, to wear a fiber limb that soothes the stump, to be a perfect woman without the use of pads. I want to follow the ladies of Siam to perfect symmetry, to rest my tired face in Egyptian mud, to fall to bed with a gentle, firm, comfortable harness on my offending nose—no screws!—no metal parts!—and to amaze my wife at breakfast. Happy days ahead! Beauty calls me—me—me, too!



Fences on Parnassus

WE are still waiting for the great play or novel of American life to be written by an American. That is the customary formula, but it needs amendment if we would summon a diversity of talent. What we really want is great writing of any kind by anybody of any nation and we should not insist that it be of contemporary life or that it concern itself with America. Anyone who is worth the prize has brains enough to choose a subject and the manner of its treatment. It is better for us, of course, if it be written in English, for then its value does not diminish in translation, but if we limit the field to American life and exact a closer realism we tie a hobble on the vagrant foot of fancy.

It is natural, perhaps, in a period when fashion smiles on barest fact, that we should forget the

less rigid fashions of the past—fashions that produced greater work than ours—and think that the only field proper to an author is the one that lies nearest to his eye. And most of us, therefore, to meet this current demand, become notebook writers, eavesdroppers with pencil sharp for scandal. We set an ear to the golden clink of profit and look incessantly at objects near at hand. We lay our nose closely against a smell, because stench has become the fashion; and our brains, like the quick shutter of a camera, record a litter of detail but smudge all colors into gray. And even if we are not mercenary to catch an echo of popularity, we fear to follow another path and seem perverse, and a kind of shame impels us to do as we are told and march in the procession. Our critics, by asserting this narrow formula, would persuade us that literalness is the only truth and they cry down the rangier romantic methods of the past. These customs have bred a squinting waspish school of writers.

There is a place, of course, for the camera in literature. I grant it right that a man who has dwelt in any village of Ohio—in any State you please—that such a man may with propriety give us an exact picture of the houses on its streets, of its tin-roofed shops, the gossip of its grocery steps, its people, the ox and ass and the stranger within its gates. If there be scandal, he may spice it up for fullest royalty. Or if there be some-

thing of gentleness and village beauty in the scene—material now neglected—these are his province, too. Or if a man's window reveals a crowded street where smells arise, where fire escapes are shabby nurseries and there is noise and chatter all day long, let him make the worst of it by concealing its better aspect and suck thereby a bit of wealth from this dirtier side of poverty!

But if our whole reward is for books that deal with barest fact—with things that lie entirely before our eyes—and fancy is cried down, then we pinch our field and build fences on Parnassus. Material residence, whether of town or of city uproar, is but a husk upon our lives; and, when we write, it is the outlook of the heart and brain, rather than the outlook of our eyes, that is the best guidance to our pens.

I have never lived in the sweating districts of the poor, or for that matter in Chuckville, let us say, but I am persuaded that one may live in either place and write honestly—with a touch of beauty, perhaps,—upon the things before his door. Or if these do not engage his sympathy he may let his fancy wander and be within his rights. He may properly choose a broader outlook than is afforded by his cluttered roofs or any range of village shops. For there must be a mist at twilight even on common hills and any crowded street may be a sufficient springboard for a leap. I must not give vent to absurd state-

ment, but it is my belief that a novel or drama of the Italian Renaissance—any prodigious thing far off—the Last Judgment or the Fall of Rome—may very well be written by the right man anywhere, in the thick of sordid smoke, in crowd or open space, in cellar or attic or fire escape, on desk or knee. It is the flight of fancy—its journey across the brain from ear to ear—that reveals the world. And this holds for Chuckville and for the thicker streets of Paris and London and New York.

For a work of art arises from within and not from a local setting; and an author's eyes may lift themselves from vulgar circumstance and look across the wide spaces of romance. If a man thinks of poverty and pigs he should write of poverty and pigs, but it is quite possible that from a seat beside a trough he may see the evening candles in the sky and be led on the singing paths of fancy. For it is protest, sometimes, rather than glad immersion, that starts the wheels of thought. And there are persons who need an outlook on a factory, the smoking stack, the whistle and the tides of sweating labor, to climb best to some fantastic peak of unreality. It is the plain that breeds the mountain in their thoughts. It is monotony that starts them running to adventure, and racket and storm of circumstance may turn them inward into quiet.

Nor should it be forgotten that Chuckville, in

"—he may see the evening candles in the sky"

its essence, stands on every map. It is a state of mind and the grayness of our thoughts. It is vulgarity, as we find it everywhere. It is the pettiness of common circumstance and it belongs to London, to New York and Paris, as well as to any swampy town beyond the pavement. All places are common, if we take them so; and all places are prisons of barest fact to a spirit that declines to break its bars.

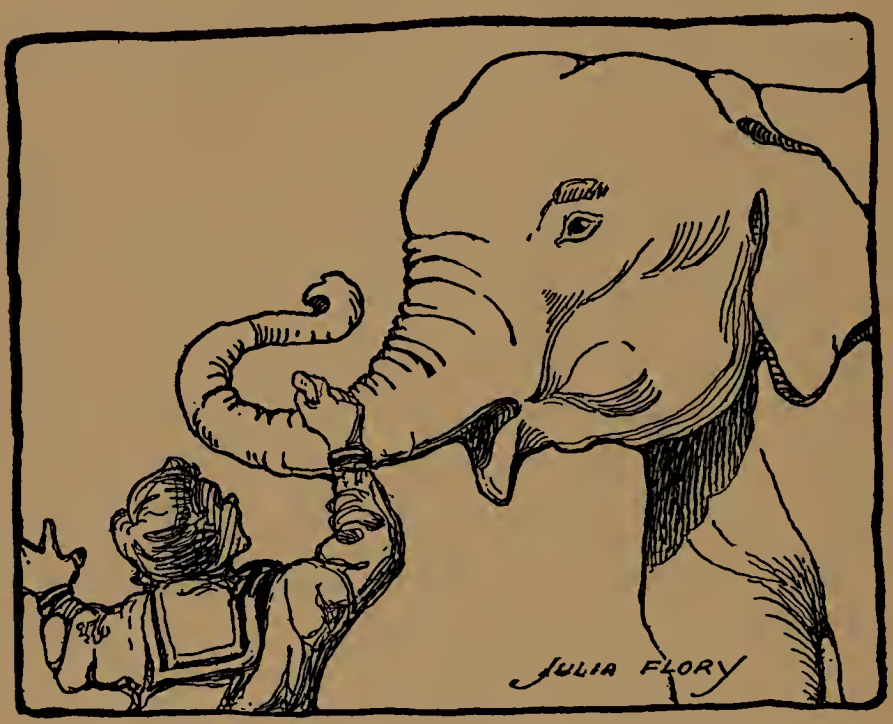
But chiefly it is neither whole immersion or protest that fashions us. We grow from inner circumstance, from a dim inheritance perhaps. We touch the God of nature somewhere and, like a puppet, we obey the pulling of a string. We are what we are, despite our fine or gross surroundings. We think and work outside our wish, on guidance beyond our power, in direction predetermined. A mystery resides within and heeds not our outward place. And from the whir of this uncomprehended gearing our thoughts rise on compulsion either to tread the familiar paths before our doors or to run on wayward whim across the world. This by consent is true of genius and, in a measure, the rule serves with sharp talent. When a critic tells us what we must write and what we must not—of pigs or castles, butcher boy or prince, of now or yesterday—he becomes a teacher in a barren school.

This, however, should not give unrestrained license to Chuckville or our fire escape to go

entirely on the loose and to flaunt an ignorance and inexperience. Nor does it insure that far-off romance springs inevitably to a pen that is reared in a village setting. And yet, when all is said, there is divinity in a masterpiece, and by no rule of the critics can its manger be foretold.

For, to repeat, if there is value in writing of what is nearest to the eye, there is value, also, in writing of what is nearest to the imagination. And imagination seldom resides at home. It has a roof somewhere, but it spends its whole life traveling. "Tell me where is fancy bred?" It is bred on one's own street, but it is often away upon a visit. There was never a night of stars that did not lay an invitation at its door. It is made of the stuff of dreams. A fact taken from a book is its passport around the world, but fancy buys the ticket. And a gingham kiss creates a princess in the heart. This truth was once believed, and writers felt themselves freed lawfully from a narrow setting. Vagrant pens have been used throughout the centuries by the best writers of English. Nor did Sophocles hold his muse to the streets of Athens, but rather he ranged on high Olympus. Homer and Dante did not stay at home, Victor Hugo or Dumas. Every noble writer of the past has packed his grip and gone on journey. Look as you will among the books and plays that have endured and you will see how large a number lie in the cottage or the castle of an alien occupation.

No one can be really sure why a monstrous bear thrives on blueberries, or how an elephant gets its bulk from peanuts. Upon what meat doth this,



"—how an elephant gets its bulk from peanuts"

our Cæsar, feed? But no one answers. Nor can we know why the poet of the ages lived behind a dunghill in dirty Stratford and ransacked eternity for metaphor. Genius and even talent have never studied dietetics or perused a geography in school. The mind leaps all barriers; and if its window looks upon a woodpile, by no necessity must it write of woodchucks.

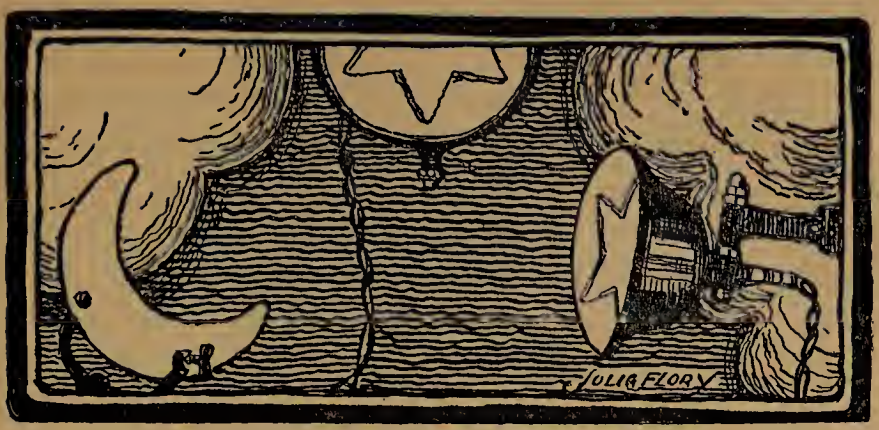
The list of truancy is tiresome. Historical

romance, as an instance, is now for a space taboo. But run through the names of the great novels and learn how large a number of them drew upon the past and trafficked with matters outside their authors' lives, with events acquired from books, with slimmest plots of other days that they colored to a semblance of the truth. *Vanity Fair* and *Esmond* are historical romance. Barchester was seen not as in reality, but a stranger saw it through a mist at night hanging on an ancient tower. Much of Dickens, Stevenson and Defoe, the best of Hewlett and all of Scott are the product of fancy that wandered off from home. England has always looked through a rainy window into Italy. Shakespeare gazed from a dingy London lodging into the golden kingdoms of the past. Ibsen, even, who is the father of our present realism, wrote in the main his Scandinavian plays of shadow and gloomy discord when he lived in gayer countries, and his plots turned to the colored south when he resided again in the gray and sunless north.

There is danger—there is hope for all of us who live in common, even in ugly circumstance. If there is ugliness in our hearts we must write with a dirty realism. If we have a turn toward sympathy and understanding we will see beauty and romance in common things about us. Or in looser mood we may fling our curtain wide at twilight and look for fiery castles in the west.

I have rambled on too long and obscured my

argument. Flatly, it is well to write of what is nearest to the eye—the tin roof, the patter of the village and the crowded street. But it is better to write of what lies nearest to the imagination. And if one really sees vividly the Fall of Rome, that is a proper subject despite our narrow fashion.



"—and put reflectors on them—"

Once There was a Furnace Boy

IT is lucky that nature proves a laggard in invention. With our restless enterprise it would push the stars forward near the earth and put reflectors on them. It would hang the clouds on a higher pole so that their curtain did not obscure the light. The moon, also, to a modern eye, is badly managed. Its movement is too eccentric. A man of shallow observation never knows its time of rising or in what quarter of the heavens it will appear. I am accustomed to catch it from my sleeping-porch, but it comes there on a whim. It grows ragged, also, through the month and lingers without profit until the sun is well advanced. It seems as if nature spent its ingenuity to light the day but left the night to shift for itself with a scheme of antiquated candles. And yet I think it lucky that nature is content with its outworn system, for something of the mystery

of night is yet preserved. Even our theaters and movies with huge electric signs can do no more than hold at arm's length the amazing darkness in which we move. And on a housetop we are still the skippers of a black uncharted sea.

I was thinking of this lately and wondering if electricity had not taken much of the adventure out of life, out of childhood especially. Lately at a neighbor's, when the children were dispatched to bed, I could not detect in their eyes any of the half-fearful look of one who is about to encounter the mystery of darkness. They had but to snap a button at the foot of the stairs and follow a lighted path to bed. Only when safe and snug in the cavern of a blanket need the light go out. In common sense, of course, this is a better thing; but something—something slight, unexplainable and of cobweb texture is lost. Our houses are too secure to breed imagination. Their shadows are the cringing servants of a lamp, and their dark and ancient reign is done.

There are now no rooms of ticklish gloom with gas jets plugged and out of use, or with tipless jet that yields a bluish dreadful flame. No longer must an upper hallway be crossed with flickering candle that beckons to the shadows. There is no twilight beneath the stairs. The pantry, with spectral windows that chilled at bedtime our search for cookies, offers now no hidden nook for villainy. The flight of steps to the attic is inno-

cence itself, and this dusty cavern underneath the roof is ceiled and set with harmless lamps.

Here once a bit of flooring had been removed—the wreckage of a plumber—and, by lying on the stomach and thrusting the head inside, one looked on a maze of pipes. A cambric theater was built about this trap in hopes that the genie of the lamp—for we planned Aladdin—might find it possible to descend within the hole. Here, also, when rain pattered on the slates and branches scratched the windows in a sudden gust, one fancied that his ship sailed furled against the tempest. On sunny days a shaft of light fell across the floor and revealed a thousand airplanes flying in the dust, but at night the attic was a place unspeakable. Did nature plan that we should always live in flaring light it would have fastened a chain upon the sun to hold its wandering foot. We shall see whether some touch of fancy that is bred in darkness may not have departed from our children.

Are there attics now where trunks and discarded furniture are piled, where the roof slopes off behind the clutter into undiscovered darkness? Do carpenters still leave holes where one may clamber above the rafters and sit in delight and fear? Are there broad upper shelves beneath the ceiling in clothes closets to which a child may climb on a narrowing ledge of projecting drawers and stow himself aloft like a pirate come ashore? Electricity has robbed childhood of a proper birthright.

I was once the furnace boy, and I fetched the coal from a bin into which no daylight ever entered. It was a perilous spot even when the sun was up, but Egypt held not so black a night. It was my custom at the dangerous hour of nine o'clock to carry down a candle from the kitchen and to hold it in front to scatter the shadows at the turn. This tempted out an equal shadow at the rear, but I was careful not to look across my shoulder. The very flame crouched back for company as I walked as if it, too, feared encounter with the dark. At the foot of the stairs the gas meter ticked with sober haunted count, and a spark of red showed at the furnace door. I now set my candle on the stones with a drop of tallow to hold it upright and went about my stoking. But when I scooped the coal I often loosened the pile above and, when it rattled toward me, I retreated to the light for reassurance until the sound of it was done. It was a place to go on tiptoe, yet I cannot remember that it was all terror. A kind of wonder filled the basement in the night, and I descended softly from the kitchen with brave thoughts thumping in my heart.

And there was a hallway in the basement just off the laundry that led in darkness God knows where. Its forward end was piled in winter with the furniture that had been used upon the porch, and I have crawled on hands and knees through the crowded darkness hoping that it might issue

on a cavern that ran beneath the city. A dim light entered from a grille and here, if anywhere, the Prisoner of Chillon with a chain upon his ankle might thrust his nose for air. A window, also, had opened from the laundry to the yard; but a pantry had been built above and it was

"—poking at the furnace with guttering candle"

another door to undiscovered darkness. With such peril beneath the house, our sitting room with lights and fire was a harbor from a storm. And down below, poking at the furnace with guttering candle, I heard the murmur of its voices and wondered how the family could sit in such security so thinly partitioned from the terrors of the dark.

But our houses now have banished danger; and children, although they tease to lengthen out the pleasures of the evening, go through placid hallways up to bed.

A Ballot of Bookish Persons

IF a ballot were cast by bookish persons as to which period of English letters chiefly engage their interest I hazard a guess that the years of Elizabeth would count the highest. And for this preference there is sufficient argument. We who are of English race look back with sharpest curiosity to this ripening of youth and the golden days of our first majority. The names of Jonson, Heywood, Marlowe and Shakespeare are music to our ears; and the rhythm of a thousand lines that halt upon the memory is the key that unlocks this older London to our fancy. The Mermaid Tavern seems pitched on the windy side of high Olympus and, as we listen to the broadcast of those ancient days, we hear across the darkened years the pleasant clamor of the poets, with rattling cup and jest and midnight song. The Bear Pit, Paris Garden, the Globe, the Curtain beyond the Walls in Finsbury, Cheapside chaffering at its bar-

gains—all the cries and shrill racket of a holiday—carry a gay recollection of the English renaissance.

Up from the dirty prisons at Newgate, a baker whose bread is short an ounce is whipped at the cart's tail for the warning and amusement of an idle throng. Bartholomew Fair announces a dancing bear, and a two-headed calf is to be seen for a half-penny. The heads of Jesuit priests decorate a row of pikes on London Bridge. Drake's ship lies at Deptford after its journey around the world and 'prentice lads neglect their shutters to run and marvel at the compass. The Thames is thick with wherries toward Southwark and the play. A painted barge drifts upon the rising tide from Greenwich with Elizabeth and her silken court. In fancy we see the great queen on the lawn at Hampton. Not a flower is plucked and offered except with rhyme and compliment. And, also, we recall a summer day of many years ago when word galloped from the west that Spanish sails were sighted from Plymouth Hoe and that Drake has left his game of bowls and snaps already like a fretful collie at Philip's scattered galleons. Then the smoky flash of war blows eastward in the Channel and swings to the windy north, until the great armada is broken on the shallow rocks of Ireland. All this is heavy argument for our Elizabethan choice.

But let us put the paler centuries up at auction, to learn what period runs its bid next highest to these spacious days of Shakspeare!

The grim heroic years of Cromwell stir the politicians and give a golden text to our fresh democracy, but they scarcely get a vote from those of us who want a touch of folly in the world to mingle with our sober pattern. As Shakespeare foresaw in *Measure for Measure* the Puritans have long since killed the theater. The Globe, the Rose and Swan are boarded close in pious shutters. Hymns have drowned the rowdy songs of Paris Garden where dogs and bears once fought. The bells of Sabbath draw a crowd to texts of fiery punishment and hell. Cakes and ale seem banished from the tavern. A few royalist singers, it is true, still linger on, bidding Lucasta farewell as they journey to the wars. What care I how good she be, a pretty fellow sings.

> If she think not well of me,
> What care I how fair she be?

But topping far above these vagrant rhymes—yet dumb to our present frivolous ear—rise the majestic heights of Milton's verse. It was only a few years back from our existing time—seventy years or more—that Congregational ministers here and there, locked in midnight study, scribbled sheets of labored imitation, justifying to their narrow parish the ways of God to man. Many of these poems were published, but they linger in old bookshops and crumble and turn yellow at the bottom of the barrel. And even this pale

adoration has departed and our bookish vote neglects the sober years of Cromwell.

Nor do the merry days of the Restoration run second to Elizabeth; for Congreve, Dryden and Wycherley are dead as Marley's Christmas ghost. We have vices in plenty of our own, and those of other times fade in our larger glitter. The comedians of manners drew a portrait that is a distant cousin of our own, but their wit has lost its point. Theirs is the little jest of a narrow circle that grows barren in a crowd. Thackeray has likened the plays of Congreve to a dance seen through a window, without the sound of fiddle to give reason to the folly. "What does it mean?" he asks, "the measures, the grimaces, the bowing, shuffling and retreating. . . . Without the music we can't understand that comic dance . . . its strange gravity and gayety, its decorum or its indecorum." The pipe of an older day is still, its ogling gesture gone, and Congreve rots on an upper shelf. There was, it is true, a sober current through the glitter of the Restoration, but it holds us as little as the riot. Bunyan may satisfy Methodists and heavenly souls, but for folk of worldly turn naught but idle curiosity now trails him through the shadowed valley of despair. The delectable mountains are swept by a wind too frosty and are not for our present climbing. Let's shake the ballot box! There is not a vote inside.

For a moment I skip beyond the days of Anne

and come to the later eighteenth century when Sam. Johnson flourished, and Boswell and Goldsmith and Gray and Garrick. Here we are on pleasant familiar ground, and I suspect it gets many bookish votes. London has burst its bounds and has scattered in shallow flood all four ways at once. Its heart of entertainment has moved from Southwark and the muddy fields of Finsbury to Covent Garden, the Strand and Drury Lane. The taverns have leaped westward from the crowded streets within the ancient walls. The Fleet, where once fishing craft had anchored, is now buried in a sewer and a city street runs above its dirty trickle. The Temple, once in a scattered suburb, now throbs at the center of noisy life. The half-timbering of the sixteenth century has been discarded for newer fashions from Italy twisted to an English taste. There is a brewery standing above the ruin of the Globe. It is to Spring Gardens up the river that jolly folk now racket for an evening's sport to drift home singing at the dawn. The richest show of silk is seen in Russell Square and Westminster is swept within the city.

Muddy ways are cobbled. Shakespeare is cobbled, too,—and his tragedies are altered to fit a current taste for happy endings. Lear recovers from the tooth of sharp ingratitude and takes happy lodging with Cordelia who, after a proper wooing, marries Kent to rule the contented is-

land. As the curtain falls upon their bliss we must imagine Lear sitting at peace, unbuttoned after dinner, upon the bench beneath his pear tree and wall of climbing roses. Desdemona by a lucky turning of the plot is saved from strangling and she advances hand in hand with a repentant Othello to receive the salutation of the pit. From darkened stall London beauties throw their hearts to Garrick across the candles as he kisses Juliet in a happy finish, and Capulet and Montague swear eternal peace. And if you will read the faded pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* that issued in those days of Johnson you will find an item here and there that Boston merchants protest a tax on tea, and that Burke and Fox plead their cause in Parliament. A gun at Lexington sounds around the world. This age has many votes of bookish persons, yet it runs not second to Elizabeth.

And then a southern wind blows up from France with a new rumor of equality, of a third estate tramped down that itches for a voice in rule. Farm tumbrels, loaded still with hay in country meadows, stand waiting for a gaudier human freight which presently, on a sunny summer morning, they will transport from the *Conciergerie* to *la Place de la Revolution.* The custom of the world grows old, but an heir is born who will run with firebrand to privilege and throne. This new thought of the times is best expressed in the British Isles

by Robert Burns. "Rank is but the guinea's stamp." And Drury Lane and Russell Square, as they trot in red heels to an evening rout, turn a surprised ear to a poetry that can arise from a dirty Scottish furrow and from a village tavern. This is quite amazing to those who thought that rhyme and measure sounded proper only in silk hose and scarlet doublet.

With the turning of the century we come to our contemporary world—what was contemporary until the storm of nineteen fourteen—to Wordsworth and Scott and Byron, Lamb and Coleridge, and then Keats and Shelley. England, frightened by the rumble of the two-wheeled carts of Paris, prepares for constitutional reform and even poets, pressed to service for the state, have a party voice and are praised and cursed as whig or tory. It is the age of the first reviewers—Gifford against Jeffrey, the *Quarterly* sinking its teeth in the progressive thought of the *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood's* building its circulation by harsher scandal —Hazlitt and Lockhart and Hunt and Southey barking in party leash. London has swept to the edge of Hampstead Heath; and Keats, dreaming on a grassy hill, looks on far-off Greece across the city's tumbled roofs. We waver for a moment how we cast our vote, and yet decline to drop it in the box.

Then time, like a careful housewife, brushes off the litter and we come to the middle days

of Queen Victoria. Russell Square has grown dingy in favor of Mayfair and signs of rented rooms hang in the windows. Drury Lane has sunk to wholesale commerce. Where chairs once crowded into Covent Garden for the play a market for flowers and vegetables is set up. The new traffic on the oceans of the world has made London a mighty city that smudges several of the English counties. It has flooded out toward Shepherd's Bush where highwaymen once challenged travelers to the west. It has spattered up the heights of Hampstead and of Highgate. The slums stretch their dirty fingers down to Greenwich.

But what person of this present time will cast his vote for the middle of the nineteenth century? It invented wall paper of flowering pattern, horsehair furniture stored now in dusty garrets, ringlets and lady's limbs. Against such enormity how can its genius shine? And yet these days of high contempt were those of Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot, Trollope, Tennyson, Carlyle, Browning, Macaulay, Newman; and memory tires in the long enumeration of mighty writers. In our ignorant bias we have forgotten that in no period of English thought is there so large a group that stands so high—that has molded our present thought to such exalted purpose. Horsehair furniture and a mincing step weights down the whole. To cast a vote for the days of *Esmond* and *David Copperfield* would brand us reactionary and out

of date; and so in sheer ignorance and prejudice our ballot box still rattles light.

And how about these present days of creeds outworn, of discord and new foundation shifting on the sand, of protest against the past, of magic harnessed to our daily use? It is best to let the future place its judgment on them, and utter a prayer that an anchor hold us from the reef. All harbor lights are out and a wind blows up to test our mooring.

Which, then, of English days, gets a vote second to Elizabeth? It is the time of Queen Anne, I think,—the time of Addison and Steele and Swift and Pope, of the Dunciad, of grottoes on the Thames, of coffeehouses, of lapdogs, red heels and pleasant scandal. I confess that I can find no really satisfactory reason for a choice that seems so arbitrary and beyond the facts. Weigh Addison and Pope against the Victorians and they seem of lighter tonnage. Save Swift alone is there a first-rate genius among them all? Addison was no more than an agreeable gentleman with a sense of humor, a delightful pen, a thirst for a witty tavern bottle and a turn for harmless gossip. Steele was a sentimental fellow who neglected his wife and wrote with a bandage of penitential ice upon his head against a last night's racket. Pope was an easy rhymster who trafficked merely on the surface and dressed a neat thought to common understanding. Certainly Anne herself pos-

sessed but a slow and stupid wit and she lacked the taste to decorate her reign with patronage. Her statue now squats beneath St. Paul's and looks with fat and sleepy gaze upon the throng of Ludgate Hill. And yet her day, although it was

"—lapdogs, red heels and pleasant scandal"

one of urban contentment and insular mediocrity, of shallow purpose and satisfaction, seems to me, Elizabeth's alone excepted, the highest favorite

with us bookish persons. The ballot box is stuffed to the very slot.

Marlborough was neglected often by his government and was forced to fight a sluggish Parliament as well as France. Despite the glory of Blenheim and Oudenarde it was his scheming wife who kept him in command. England, although his armies strung their victories across the continent in an unbroken series hardly equaled later by Napoleon, was still the artistic pensioner of France and the glare of the sun-king cast a shadow across the foggy channel. I fancy that the fashion of a bow, the figure of a minuet, a gesture and sweep of arm, the cut of doublet and length of sleeve, the precise thumbing of a pinch of snuff, were all of imitation from Versailles. Toes turned in or out, heads were curled or cut, ribbons were tied as King Louis gave the word.

Only lately a Dutch fleet has anchored in the Thames and burned Rochester, so that the smudge, if the wind was right, must have smelled to London. The city has been burned and struck by plague. A tempest has destroyed many hundred buildings. The navy and the dream of an empire beyond the seas are yet to come. It is but two years since the first cargo of cotton arrived in Liverpool from America which in time is to build the industries of the Midlands. Coal is mined only for domestic use and the fabric of iron has hardly started. The fleet owned in London river hardly totals in its

tonnage one mighty ship to-day. Manchester and Birmingham are rustic villages, unsoiled by prosperous stacks. The Union with Scotland is still in stormy conference and a spark will blow the two countries into war. It is a time of witches and astrology; of hideous punishment for trivial crime, and there is scarcely a week when a fresh body is not hung at Tyburn to infect the highway to the west. St. Paul's dome at last is finished. The first London daily newspaper has been published. A first opera has been played in England, to be ridiculed by Addison. Sir Isaac Newton is alive, but with greater work completed. A Stuart pretender is courted at Versailles and his ambition fed to seize the British crown and fetch the Roman mass to open use.

I confess that when I walk the streets of present London it is to the years of Queen Anne that my fancy most often turns. Perhaps at the Temple it is Lamb or Johnson whom I see. Or in Mayfair I catch more frequently Lord Steyne and Becky Sharp. It is Beau Brummel I see upon the Mall, arm in arm with H. R. H. the fat prince. In the city I hear best the echoes from the Mermaid. But here and there and all about rise the shadows of the Queen Anne wits. I have set Buttons at a dozen corners where a shabby front invites me. I have prowled in courtyards off the Strand to let my memory find the Grecian. In any fog I hear the cries of linkboys in Drury Lane conduct-

ing the great Mr. Addison in safety to his chair. On the embankment in a misty night I see barges toiling up to Vauxhall where Sir Roger once declined a bottle of mead offered by a naughty baggage.

Our vote is cast, and the box of bookish persons rattles full. What manner of town was this London on that morning of March the first, seventeen hundred and ten when the first *Spectator* paper appeared?

On Thursday, at the hour for chocolate when the paper was thrust beneath the door, there lived in greater London between five and six hundred thousand persons. About twenty times that number, if an errand take them, can now ride on a bus-top to the Bank. It was not till about the middle of the nineteenth century that London grew with a sudden bound; and in these older days an increase of population was discouraged. There were edicts in the reign of Elizabeth that prohibited the building of new houses except as they replaced the old. Perhaps, with bad drainage and flimsy walls, an overcrowding brought plague and fire.

London's western limit in the days of Anne lay where Bolton Street now leads north from Piccadilly and Green Park; and this district, which is a present center for polite shopping and exclusive clubs, must have been but a scattered suburb wavering into fields. Hyde Park already existed, named for the grandfather of the Queen, whose History of the Rebellion was published in her

reign; but instead of being an inclosure within the city, it lay like a common on the furthest edge of town. St. Pancras church, now below Euston Station and Regent's Park, was set in the muddy country at a distance for a picnic. There is a contemporary account of a wedding party floundering there in great discomfort and standing to the minister bespattered with clay.

There were farms to the north of the British Museum, where now a nest of settlement stretches for many crowded miles. The slums of London had not spread through Whitechapel to the east and we may fancy that its grassy spaces were a resort upon a holiday. There was still but one bridge across the river and wherries waited for a fare. The Strand was a shopping center—not, as now, a place of bargains, but a street where ladies matched a ribbon to their eyes and flirted to a tavern window from their chairs. Bloomsbury was the fashionable quarter and the houses of the great were set in gardens that looked through unobstructed country up to Highgate. Mayfair had not yet come to wealth; and, as its name implies, a rowdy celebration of contortionists and dancing bears was given there each spring in the open fields. Moored at Whitehall was a barge named "The Folly" with a promenade on top. It had been a fashionable resort for dancing in the summer evenings of the Restoration, but now its fame is tarnished by a noisier company.

London streets were narrow and irregular, ill-paved and lighted by infrequent oil lamps or by the flickering lantern of a traveler. Houses were not numbered and shops were marked by a hanging signboard. Merchandise was piled upon the curb. Water dripped from the pent roofs and rubbish lay uncollected until a warrant required its disposal. If old prints be right it was a usual thing to pour slops from an upper window; and to go abroad when housewives were busy at their chores was to be in danger of a soapy deluge. Water for domestic use was pumped by hand through wooden pipes from the Thames or New River, or flowed down from the ponds of Hampstead and Highgate. The traffic of the streets was by coach and chair, and six horses were the mark of wealth and station. The Thames was still a thoroughfare for wherries, but since Elizabethan days the city had spread somewhat from the river.

"—Delicate Cowcumbers to Pickle!"

It was an age of itinerant merchants. Buy my Dish of great Eeles! Buy a new Almanack! Colly Molly Puffs! Any old Iron, take money for! Six pence a pound fair cherryes! Four paire for a Shilling, Holland Socks! Crab, Crab, any Crab! Buy my four Ropes of Hard Onyons! Delicate Cowcumbers to Pickle! Small Coale! New River Water! Lilly White Vinegar 3 pence a .quart! Old Satten, Old Taffety or Velvet! Buy my Dutch biskets! A Merry new Song! Knives or cissors to grinde! Maids, buy a moppe!

London was guarded at night by old men who carried lanterns and bells, and it was a fashionable diversion to beat them up. When the watch was laid away it was a favorite pastime to catch up a woman and spin her in disorder on her head, or to stuff her in a barrel and roll her with a reckless bounce down Ludgate Hill. No pedestrian who walked alone was safe when the hour was late. You may remember how Sir Roger is counseled to take Captain Sentry with him as a guard against the Mohawks, and how the butler walked at the head of the footman in the rear.

To read the accounts of these days of Anne one would think that ladies of fashion always slept till noon, then sat up languidly for a cup of chocolate and called for a glass to survey the ruin of their complexions. There is a description of one of these lazy women in a lively contemporary play. "I stretch—and make a sign for

my chocolate," she says. "When I have drunk three cups, I slide down again upon my back, with my arms over my head, while my two maids put on my stockings. Then, hanging upon their shoulders, I am trailed to my great chair, where I sit and yawn for my breakfast." Then she drinks twelve dishes of tea and eats eight slices of bread and butter, and is ready for artistic work upon her face—powder, paint and patch. She takes the air in the afternoon, cheapens a bit of silk upon the Strand, pays a visit or two and is ready for dinner and a midnight killing.

Perhaps there were men who worked—mechanics and merchants sweating in the city—but any pretty fellow ogled the ladies all day at a tavern window. He smoothed his lace, yawned, sat to endless pipe and cup, played at ombre, saw the play and frolicked against the watch till dawn.

It is amazing that a period so unheroic can hold its fascination. There are mighty battles on the continent and England sits in the council of the world. The British Empire first stirs to life. The quarrel of centuries with Scotland is healed. Louis Fourteenth is held from the conquest of the continent and Spain falls beyond his greedy grasp. But these large affairs seem of such indifferent interest to the London wits. Opera and red heels, a jest from Button's, a new beauty to be toasted from her satin slipper, chair and linkboy, a lazy tavern window, a farce by Farquhar, Nicolini

at the opera, the latest gesture of a minuet, a style of doublet fresh from Paris, a new wine from Portugal to boycott France—all these outweigh Oudenarde and Malplaquet in Bloomsbury and in the park.

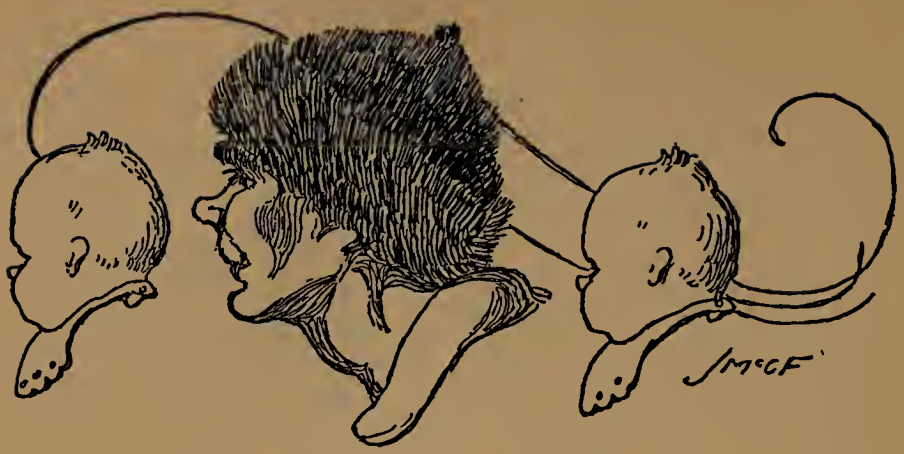
It must be that in all of us bookish persons—in everybody with a spark of folly—there lurks a love of triviality and gossip. I have remarked that biographies that lead us among petty matters and small personal encounter are of easier and more delightful reading than great stiff volumes that traffic in the fall of dynasty and empire. We would rather be told an Admiral's taste in neckwear than his strategy upon the sea, and we skip a chapter weighted down with prodigious victory for another that is spiced with pretty scandal.

"—the shallow days of Anne"

We are old women in our hearts, I fear, and we have sharpest welcome for a friend who comes for tea to tilt at doubtful reputations.

The Reform Bill, the nightless Empire of Victoria, the song of poets, the iron fist of Cromwell—almost, I had said, the swift galleons of fiery Drake—grow pale and languid beside a night at Button's and the red heels that tap upon the strand.

And so, I repeat, our fancy, wandering in the past, chooses to settle on the shallow days of Anne and to rummage in its trivial life.



"—each new baby, each immigrant"

A Million in 1930

COMING lately through our Public Square I observed a signboard announcing that by the end of this decade our city expects to number a million persons. A painted thermometer forty feet high, lifted and propped on stilts, shows how feverishly we already approach this perfection of many ciphers. With each new baby, each immigrant, we grow hotter toward the goal. Our zeal and enterprise will push us past Detroit in a year or so and we shall be able to bite our thumbs across the lake.

You may imagine my delight and civic pride that we so swell and burst our prosperous buttons. In the happy day when we pass Detroit I shall order new letter paper and have it stamped "Fourth City" in brightest red. I shall ask to join the Rotary Club so that I can yell our triumph in largest chorus.

With swiftly added growth we shall have pleasanter and more crowded streets, a greater hazard and excitement, a thicker traffic in foreign language, more and larger theaters of cheap performance, cigar stores, bowling alleys, billiard rooms, barber shops, boarding houses with ten thousand more rooms to rent, twenty miles or so of further billboards, an extra hundred stacks to wave the smoky banner of our progress. A suburb of standard houses made on wholesale contract will stretch more deeply across the county and rest the eye with quiet monotony. There will be a more agreeable jangle at the crossings, more chalk upon the pavement to keep us in impatient line when the evening whistle blows.

Our surface cars will grow more clubby. We shall add a slaughterhouse to unload its perfume in the river. We shall bake another million loaves of bread. We shall have our choice of a larger colored supplement at night and forty pages of advertisement to read at breakfast. Longer and dirtier boats will run up the Cuyahoga with ore and iron. We shall be more neighborly and live without a garden, but with a friendly elbow in our ribs. Our fame will spread to the discontented lands of Europe and we shall become a port of immigration for cheap and ignorant labor to crowd to happy suffocation our sweating factories.

We are, of course, quite excited by our bigness, and civic bodies have named committees to hold

our zeal to pitch. We have obtained the Republican Convention to clinch our place upon the map. We have built an auditorium that seats more than the Roman Forum. We have electric signs that almost match New York, the biggest banking room in all the world.

Our city has already more than five times the population of Elizabethan London. Little Akron at our gates is a larger town than Shakespeare knew. No one seems to know how populous Athens was under Pericles—for then, to her shame, there were no Rotary Clubs to insist upon a census and flash it proudly by electric sign—but it is a guess that we have twenty times its number. We are larger than Florence of the Medici by several ciphers. Paris, when the fourteenth Louis was its golden king, was a village beside of us. Rome never had so tall a building, Nineveh such crowded streets. Babylon never walked at night beneath such glitter of advertisement. Constantinople could hardly boast so many smoky stacks, such stockyards, foundries or slaughterhouses, factories that turn out in a single cutting so many thousand pairs of pants. No such smells rose from the Tiber, the Seine or Thames as rise in August to a grateful nose from the oily waters of our darling river.

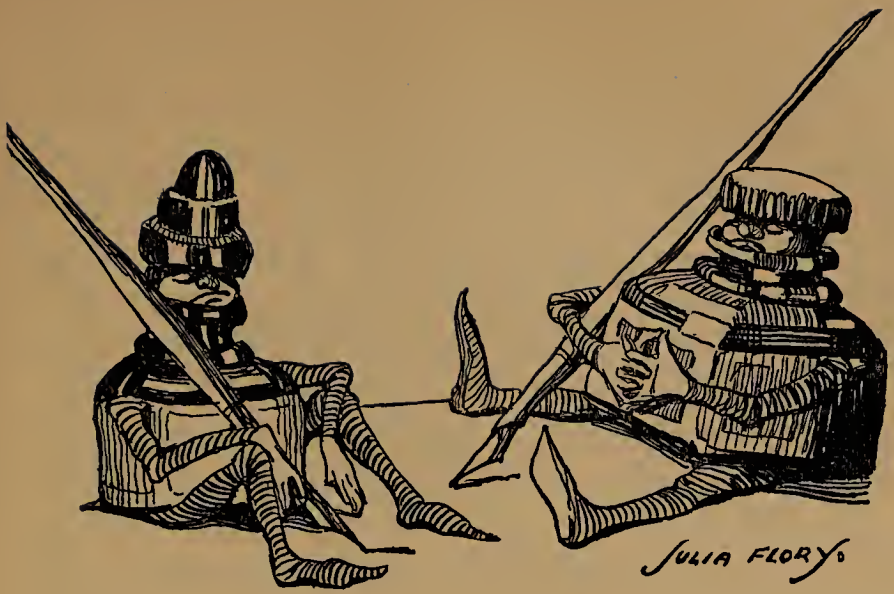
Our billboards would be the wonder and amazement of the Renaissance. We have twenty strikes of labor to one at Babel. We could lodge Padua and Verona in a single building. The flocks of

Abraham would hardly crowd a single train of cars and could be butchered in an hour. The pyramids would be dwarfed among our higher towers. The lamps of Carthage, all the uproar of Tyre and Sidon would be lost among us in the rush at night when business shuts its shop.

"—Let us have a bigger and dirtier city"

We are on tiptoe toward prodigious things. Our newspapers, our hotels, our surface lines, our taxicabs, our theaters, our factories and mills, our realtors and building companies, the excited gentlemen of the advertising club—every one and every thing that has an interest in our advancement and our sudden growth of population have come together for a mighty push. They

have imagination and a forward look. All live wires have got together. We need one hundred thousand illiterate folk from Russia and the Balkans to smudge our prosperous county. Everyone's shoulder to the wheel! Let us fret the mountains for cheap coal and build another thousand stacks! Let us have a bigger and dirtier city! In 1930 we must give Detroit our dust.



Lazy Ink-Pots

WHEN I think of what easy remnants essays may be made I wonder that every lukewarm pen does not engage its leisure in throwing them together. A man of moderate ingenuity has but to cast about in nearest circumstance to find matter for his thought. If his study window looks upon a garden a score of subjects will rise from grass and flowering bush to crowd his ink-pot. He has but to hold himself in leisure, then dip and start. Perhaps upon the lawn a sundial meets his eye and, in speculation of the wise saw that is carved upon the bronze, his thought will run through all eternity to find the edge of time. *Horas non numero nisi serenas!* It was such a motto—I count but the sunny

hours—that sent Hazlitt through a dozen pages of delightful meditation that sing like a drowsy tune of summer. The flowering of a jonquil or the drooping of a lilac guides us to the running of the year. By what magic does nature sort its colors from the sun and tip its brush with yellow for the daffodil? By what favor does the iris get its motley to racket through the month of June? Or if stars be out, we sit in wonder at the everlasting whipcord that sends us spinning through alternate day and night. The flash of Orion on its breathless journey of a million years provides us argument for eternity.

For myself, possessing a pen of but a soft and modest nib, this grand theology does not tempt me. My own window, also, rises from a garden, but it is the trivial matters that stir my fancy. My thoughts vibrate, as it were, to a gentler broadcasting out of space. A rooster's braggart note, the roll of the city's grumbling traffic as if it grudged its hours of work, the gardener's rake scratching at the gravel, a far-off lawn mower whirring with a locust's deeper voice—these sounds trickle to my thought. Or perhaps a noonday bell turns the world backward for a score of years and the children of my recollection tumble out of school to a long vacation. For three months of careless days it will not matter whether Columbus sailed from Italian or Spanish port, or who it was who looked with wild surmise, silent, upon a

peak in Darien. I fling again my battered books to discard and romp to freedom. I feel the hot stones on my bare feet, the cool caress of shadowy grass. For a summer afternoon I lie in dreams of far adventure on the tossing seas. A dozen such topics at a noonday bell come racing to my lazy pen.

I have already found engaging trifles for an essay in a Monday's wash as it swings on a neighbor's line, and a bit of fluttering lace has been a prologue to a paragraph on vanity. I have observed, also, how a stiff wind tempts the garments to a lively one-step, and have cast my thoughts upon a dance that takes thus its rhythm from the sky. The charming Mrs. X——, who offers the street scarcely her timid ankle, on a reckless Monday shows a dozen brazen stockings to the garter; and ribbons that have done no worse than play at peek-a-boo now stare me out of countenance. I once read a scandalous novel in which a stolen glance across a hedge at an intimate bit of windy silk sent the hero on a golden quest to find its owner. He pilfered the dainty garment from the line and offered it, like Cinderella's slipper, among his whole acquaintance for a fitting.

A friend of mine confesses that she once planned a little play for children, which was to open in a garden with a stretch of linen between the posts. Her plot provided that these garments were prisoners in the castle of a hideous giant, shrunk

by magic to this thin shadow of themselves. Certainly they flapped sadly and languished for

"—they flapped sadly and languished for a ransom"

a ransom. But presently, as the play proceeds, a good fairy restores them by a powerful hocus-pocus and unclasps the wooden pins that hold

them bound. Doublet-and-hose, quite bellied out with summer breeze, now proves to be the hero. By a cunning stratagem he ducks the horrid laundress in her tub until the bubbles cease to rise; then, turning to a pretty petticoat, he asks her to name the happy day. Our lovers finally escape across the battlements in a gale of wind and scamper to a parson. The giant—for the play has a pleasant ending—the giant, in the hurry of pursuit, gets tangled in a clothesline and dangles in a fatal noose as the curtain falls.

But perhaps an aspirant toward letters has not the luck to write upon a Monday when posts have this harvest of suggestion. If so, an agreeable paper may be contrived out of any knothole in his garden fence. Did I not myself in beardless days through such a chink spy the gracious Messalina when she came among us on a visit? Her cool green dress that scarcely reached her knees—for then our careless world was young—quite shook my brain as I took her piercing arrow in my heart.

Since the night of summer madness when Pyramus kissed Thisbe through a similar crevice—an indiscretion beyond Messalina and myself—these crannies have been a steady property in tales of love. I have no doubt but that Montague and Capulet had a wooden fence between their gardens—that Tristan and Isolde, also, met in such circumstance eye to eye. And yet I commend

the nimble Mr. Winkle who disdained a narrow chink and leaped the wall to the panting arms of his Arabella. Mr. Pickwick, as I recall, was an excellent chaperon and retired meantime behind a lilac bush until a kiss could seal their bargain. Or rather, on second recollection, he flashed a lantern on the alley till it was thought to be a comet out of space. Some day, when I try my hand at fiction of this sentimental sort, I shall hang a moon above an apple tree and let my lovers scheme their elopement discreetly through a knothole.

Need I do more than mention the essays that may be made from the traffic of the summer clouds, of the stars that decorate my garden in the night? The moon itself would cramp a heavy volume. Like a shrewd watchman of the night it declines to hold sharply to the clock for a better chance of pouncing down on shady mischief.

Nor is a window on a garden a necessity in a quest of subject. If the casement of an essayist looks out upon a crowded city the fancy skips among the towers and buildings. It plunges through a hundred scuttles and seeks comedy and tragedy from room to room. It rolls back the roofs and treads the corridors with silent observation. Since Teufelsdröckh meditated on a golden night at his lofty window, this has been the outpost of high philosophy, and an attic window, since time began, has been a coign of vantage

for a poet. We think that it is poverty that drives them beneath the roof. Rather, they look on a larger sky and launch here a sonnet for higher flight.

But perhaps a writer has been too long inside his study. If he chew more than an hour upon an unproductive pencil he should bellow for his boots and seek the air. And right here, despite all facts to the contrary, I argue that most essays of a pleasant trivial sort are composed in rougher draft in the streets and fields. Once in a while, no doubt, a ponderous Macaulay may smother himself indoors with his finger on a score of books; but smaller writers need the sun and wind. Lamb, I acknowledge, has tried to persuade us that he wrote behind a shutter. "The enfranchised quill," he asserts, ". . . frisks and curvets so at its ease over the flowery carpet-ground of a midnight dissertation." Clearly, he thought that he worked indoors. But the best of him, I am confident, was composed on the London cobbles 'twixt India House and Temple Gardens, dodging at the curb a nimble cab. I have walked this crowded course myself, hoping that some magic might have escaped his pen for my stupid gleaning. But Stevenson has confessed to the notebook that he carried in his pocket; and Hazlitt, by implication. There is fair evidence that most good essays are started on the hoof and merely polished at a desk. Addison I take to have been a sedentary kind of person

who took his ease in a tavern chair with a tap of liquor handy; and yet the subjects of his papers are so usually from the streets that I think he must have walked beyond his acknowledgment.

There is a touch of the study in Leslie Stephen—too many facts to be gained entirely on the curb—and yet the man was a champion walker and took his twenty miles in an afternoon. And certainly a writer with Thackeray's long legs could not keep them stuffed always beneath a desk. Essayists, you will find, are uncommonly fond of old hats and walking sticks—and of old boots especially, for a new and squeaky pair breaks the measure of a thought.

I find that a leisured stride is the best rhythm to start an essay, for it is by an easy vibration and tuning of the legs that the message flashes with least interference out of space. Hurried fiction doubtless fits to a quick patter of the feet—just as an epic demands a drawl—but thirty-three inches toe to toe, with legs in deliberate pendulum like a tall old-fashioned clock, is suited to an essayist's vagrant paragraph. Swift, who was himself an essayist, has told us somewhere precisely the number of steps between his lodging and his coffeehouse. It may have varied with his humor, but he proclaims the average. I recommend to writers that they lay a careful measure on their course and give each stride an easy length. In the bitterness of his usual mood, Swift,

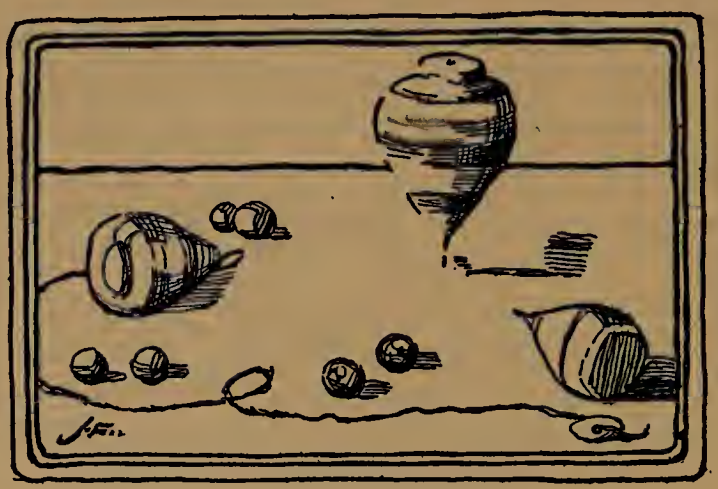
I think, scanted a thirty inches and trotted with ugly patter suited to his venom.

Postmen and bundle boys, with but a hint to start them, might cast off an essay once a month without slacking against their pay; and when I have seen a peripatetic ragman of philosophic countenance—his whiskers are a foul disguise—I have wondered whether he were not an essayist, prowling at back doors for cheap material. His cry of paper-rags may be but a blind to let him in the cellar where he will rummage for a subject.

If common folk of business, society and the deep professions knew how thievishly an essayist steals their words and uses them with the thin disguising of phrase, they would be on better guard. I have myself—although indifferently honest in other matters—rifled a dinner party and sold it out for a penny to the word. Theft from books is quite another thing, but an idea often starts from the shoulders of another's thought. If it pursues an honest independent path it keeps within the law; but sometimes, because of a prolonged stewing in the brain it mixes with native stuff and it is hard to know the true title of the property. In purest innocence one becomes a thief and deserves the gallows.

It may be folly to expose the subject to my rivals—cunning fellows of the ink-pot, eager at a hint—yet at my first leisure I plan to draft a paper on all children's games that are played upon

the street. I have certain shrewd remarks to make on tops and marbles and all the varieties of hopscotch that are chalked on sidewalks. But chiefly I shall sit in a vacant lot around the corner where I shall watch a baseball game from end to end to recruit the vigor of my vocabulary.

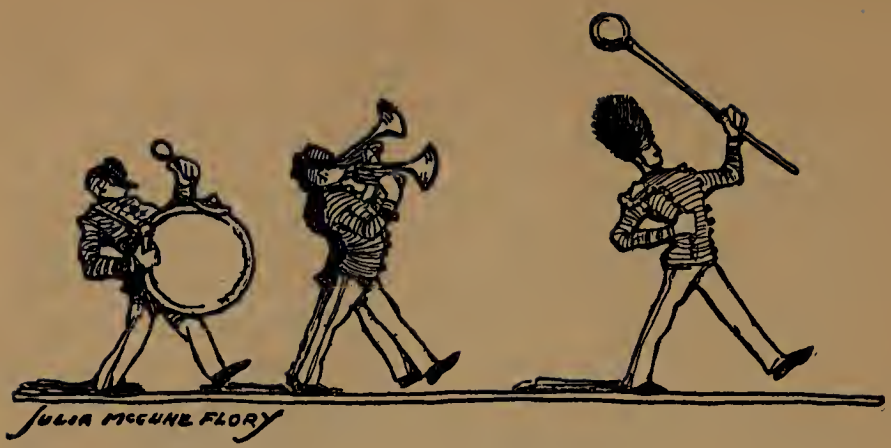


"—tops and marbles"

Why, therefore, in the name of common sense, should one sweat upon a novel, and foam and fidget to get all the stubborn parts to fit—plot, character and situation? It takes brains to build a persuasive villain and to throw a heroine into jeopardy for a happy rescue. And when you have brought out the old tricks from their box and have set them together with great labor; when you have sold the manuscript, which itself alone is a dirty job with many disappointments; then at last, to your disgust, you will find a hundred novels issued

in the month that are better than yours—really not better, of course, but of better favor to the unlettered mob. Six months pass and your dusty overstock, unloaded by the publisher, will be neglected at fifty cents a copy on the bargain table.

It is far better to sit in pleasant leisure at your window and weave a paragraph from the small excitement of your garden—to speculate on clouds and think them treasure ships that gallop from the Indias. If no editor buys your pages it will not matter much, for the pay at best is small and the real profit lies in the pleasure gained by weaving thought to a gracious phrase.



Trippingly on the Ear

I LISTEN to music in much the same manner as I eat. If the food be clean, wholesome and of a happy flavor an indeterminate delight suffuses my grateful sense; but, when I have swept away the crumbs, I am unable to fasten on particulars and tell whether it were flesh or fish that has engrossed me. On any challenge I poke vainly at the wreckage of my plate to learn by what path I journeyed from the soup. A certain hostess of my acquaintance, knowing my weakness in these matters of the fork, shamed me once as I was picking at my salad by asking me to name the meat that had gone before. I was wrong, of course, and she threatens me next time with horse. Mine, I repeat, is a pure emotion of the digestive tract—a tickling of trap and passage divorced from conscious intellect.

And so it is with music. If the tune be more than an easy tinkle I am lost in fantasy and, when the

orchestra is stopped, I cannot set my foot on the trail that has led me through the wilderness. I have but a common ear. They are but an idle gothic decoration that marks my maker's whim for beauty. They ring an ignorant bell within my heart, but run no wire to sound upon a sluggish brain.

And yet a common ear may no longer be despised. A few nights since I dined with a friend—mushroom soup, upon my oath, a crown of excellent beef and a meringue to quit! This friend gives his evenings to the radio, and he introduced a concert for my entertainment. It was the first radio that I had heard, and I sat open-mouthed in wonder. But as music it was naught, because of much scratching of the wire. Nor was my host content, through a restless zeal for further contact, to let the tune be played until its end. No sooner had a one-step come among us from the Biltmore and been smoothed of interference than he tried the mountains for a waltz. When he had managed this and I was sunk in a dreamy moonlit melody from the Catskills, suddenly he threw the switch to New Orleans for a rasping jazz. And then the Davenport School of Chiropractic burst upon us—a jolly tune that wins me to its cult and shakes my faith in allopathic pills. Davenport may not be known along the seaboard, but its concert is always popping in upon our wider spaces of the west. I am still to be informed

whether this band plays among the patients during the manipulation of a stubborn cartilage—perhaps in public clinic—or whether it does but advertise the school to show the outside world how merrily a bone is cracked.

But all this abrupt change is a jolt to a sedentary ear that sits in slippers. Thirty bands in the street-procession of a holiday—rising, intermingling and fading to a sharper blast—cannot stir up such confusion. And yet it was amazing how so simple a contrivance—it seemed but a battery and a lamp or two—could tap the sounds of night and fetch a waltz across a thousand miles.

I am told that the more ardent disciples of the radio have now the vicious habit of sitting up until two o'clock to listen to the pleasures of the Pacific coast. It is sheer amazement grips them—the magic whereby the scratching of tiny strings can leap the mountains and scamper across the confusion of a continent to tickle their sleepy ears. But I wonder if clerks nowadays do not nod upon their ledgers from bad hours and broken rest. And it must be hard to keep attention to the sordid matching of a ribbon when last night the kingdoms of the world came near. I know a sleepless wife—herself unmechanical at tuning in—who tugs at her husband in the dead vast and middle of the night to set the disk for the entertainment of her insomnia. He, like a good stupid fellow, falls asleep when the wires are fixed, but the music

is a thread across his dreams. Through difference of time, we may yet have contact with Japan to fetch us out of sleep and soothe our sullen breakfast. At present the radio dispenses nothing better than market reports and hints to housewives up till noon, but this will be remedied when Leningrad, a good eight hours to the east of us, can be tapped for a program in its earlier night. And so, as festivity fades to daylight in the far-off Occident, already the pleasures of the east begin; for the sun never rises on the evening racket of the radio.

It is the radio that has brought to the ear its proper legacy, delayed so long in the endless chancery of ignorance. Since time began the eye has traveled in the night without a leash, while the ear like a housewife has been kept at home. When first the hills were new it was the eye that caught the fire smoldering in the Pleiades and trafficked on endless journeys in the sky. The mind itself can hardly take so quick a leap. But now at last our household drudge is given boots to wear and may tread in an instant around the world. It may yet hear a tune of war from Mars or listen to the peaceful broadcast of the yellow stars. The music of the spheres, once heard in ancient Greece, is but a prophecy of our larger time.

But in these matters invention has gone far enough. The ear should be permitted to range

freely as it will, but by no compulsion; lest neither desert nor icy pole offer escape from the noises of the night. A man's head must still be his castle against unwelcome uproar and attack. Even now it frets me to think of the clamor that threatens to assail me—of the million booms and cries and rattle—all the squeak and hubbub of diverse activity that try my window all day long to steal the attention of my ears. A wad of cotton is man's last bastion against assault.

An ingenious friend informs me that sound is imperishable and that it radiates forever from our noisy world. The uproar of ancient Babylon, he says, is sounding somewhere—maybe on far-off Antares—and it is only necessary to bend back the waves on a hairpin turn under geometric formula in order that we may catch the jovial night-life of its forgotten kings. With this bender perfected and cleared of interference from the school at Davenport we may yet listen to the falling walls of Rome and hear the harsh commands of Goth and Vandal. These sounds, returned from their lonesome journey—keen for the welcome of an ear (it was only in populated Mars they got a hearing)—these sounds, I say, will instruct us in the noises of prehistoric times. I pray to God that the racket will not be on compulsion to wreck my quiet evenings.

But I choose to write of the ear more narrowly as it tilts itself without miracle to music.

For these many years I have trained my awkward ears by exposure to opera and concert. At the symphony I am a moderate student and if the harmony rolls up to a sharp excitement it throws my thoughts into a pleasant meditation that quite destroys the building and its cluttered audience and sends me on a glittering path. In the mesh of sound, although I understand it not in detail, I am quick to lay a plot and hear the far-off voice of tragedy and love.

Among those who profess more music than they possess, the ear too often is a snob and it withholds its careful skirt from vulgar contact. Such persons are slow to praise a tune that starts from common company. If it be a lilt that sends a jiggle to the feet, this is enough to damn it; and if the saxophone take part their nose goes up as for a smell. I can recall no more wholesome sight than that of my friend D— S—, who has attained an honorable name in music, as he led on one secular occasion a jazz band in a fine fever of excitement. It was at a class reunion. Before he took the stand there had been some inclination to throw biscuits and bits of bread inside the tuba—did it not offer an open quivering trunk like a hungry elephant?—but Davy checked the rowdies. He was none of your lukewarm conductors. He bullied the players with threatening baton until horn and drum were hot; and I wish that these snobbish critics might have heard him.

And so, warmed by his example, I confess that I am often moved by coarser melodies. A street organ, if one listens with sympathetic ear, sends

"—He was none of your lukewarm conductors"

forth a robust harmony that marks the spring. In not such quick excitement does Pan arouse the creatures of a woodland stream. In a restaurant of cheaper music I find my foot thumping to the tune.

But usually I find opera silly, especially if it be of the German sort. I am offended by the mighty stature of the lovers. A waist that is overfed on sweets beyond the easy girdle of an arm is not a fit companion in an exchange of love. With a dozen comely Valkyrs standing idle how can Siegfried devote himself to the bouncing Brunhilda? These buckwheat duets—sugared stomach panting close to stomach—are much too gross. Nor is Siegfried himself entirely a hero in every one of his fifty circumambient inches. He labors with his pillowy burden among the encircling flames. With blown trot he climbs the mountain's canvas slope. Romeo may have a ringing voice to upper C, but he bulks fat in the soft Italian moonlight. Ophelia humps too large beneath her shroud. These things vex me. The bellows at my hearth are of equal power, but with a better concealment of their art. I like the music without these padded puppets who have sat too long at beer. The song of the dying Tristan is sweeter in my ears if it is carried only by the strings and is but an echo of a passion that has vanished from the earth. It is then that the tempest quite blows me from my moorings and I sail beyond the pillars of the world.

And except it be a bass or heavier tenor I care little for a solo on the stage unless my eye be tricked by beauty. A bass by his robustious tone can hold the tune alone, but shrill tenors and sopranos are too frail to go without assistance.

As for a deep contralto, she suggests too much a long black beard. And the gentleman behind me,

"—A Valkyr . . . hallooing to the echo of the hills"

even if he has the tune by heart, must not hum and beat the time against my chair. I demand,

also, that the solo of the stage be in occasional concord with the orchestra and not wander always by itself in separate trill. I have sometimes wondered if it were not loose on an impromptu with tune forgotten, so perversely does it avoid what I am pleased to think is melody. I like opera best at the falling of a curtain when the whole village of linked lovers gathers for a final effort.

But music in its essence craves freedom and should not be cooped indoors. A Valkyr sounds best hallooing to the echo of the hills, and a moderate voice that lifts itself on the silent water of a summer night is worth more than a shriller note imprisoned in a hall. There are tunes from the Grand Canal in Venice, from the August twilight of the English lakes, from gardens set with glistening stars—tunes once broadcasted into space which return in memory to tease the heart with fragile loveliness.

"—the dim shapes of Keats and Shelley"

Mr. Keats Beckons to Me

IT has never occurred to me that I could write verse except it were the merest jingle. "There was a young monk of Siberia." That sort of thing. But serious verse has been an art sacred and apart, and its temple swept of muddy feet. To poetry's narrow definition I have admitted but a scanty dozen and the range of these has been so lofty that I have never even so much as considered how it would feel to limp behind in cheap imitation and mediocrity. Anyone, I have thought, could rattle on a prosy drum, but only a master should essay the shriller passion of a violin.

A few nights ago, however, "when the iron tongue of midnight" had told twelve to the listening ear of darkness, I was stirred by thoughts

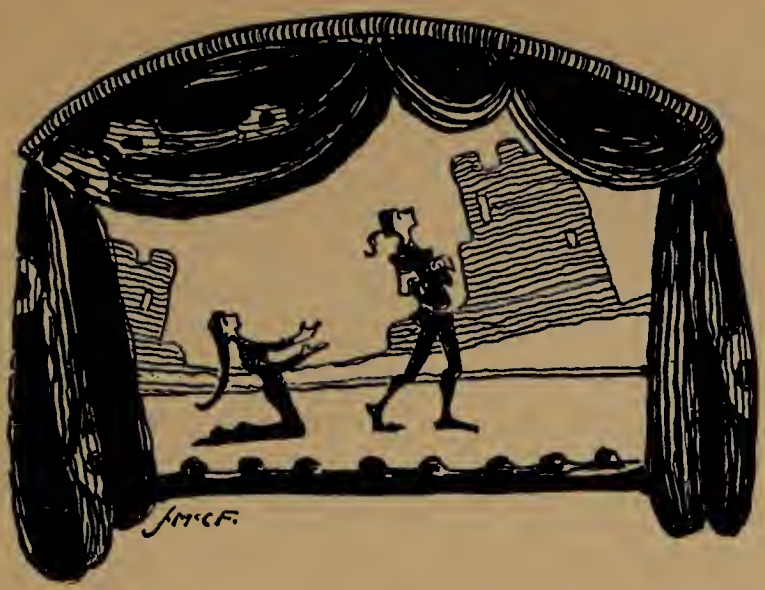
that demanded a more crowded vent than prose affords; and so, after fumbling for an hour upon a crippled paragraph—suddenly!—I announced to myself that I would write a sonnet and let the lid blow off. The Italian form, however, seemed too hard because of its reiteration of a rhyme; so I pitched on Shakespeare and laid down its scheme on paper—A, B, A, B!—for an easier guidance. When the fourteen verses had been written—the clock now striking three—I counted the measures on my fingers and tried their stress this way and that. To my amazement, hard as I put the strain, my rhythm did not crack. I was as pleased as a child who discovers that there is a tune inside his rattle.

Undoubtedly, as it seemed, I had written something that charity might call a poem. For a half hour I sat with the paper in my fingers and muttered my verses with great satisfaction. Shakespeare could not have droned his freshest lines of Lear with higher self-conceit. I performed even the business of throwing off my clothes in a kind of impromptu ballad, like Cyrano when he casts aside his cloak to fight a duel. And so to bed.

But I was too excited by my triumph to fall asleep at once, and as long as I remained in conscious thought all manner of rhymes and measures tossed in my feverish head. Mince pie is a pale sister to a sonnet. From the shadows of my room I saw the dim shapes of Keats and Shelley beckon-

ing to me to be a third, with a strange bit of nightmare in their hands that I am persuaded must have been a laurel crown that they sought to place upon my head.

It is all very ridiculous, for I read the verses after breakfast. I have taken to the drum again.



A Few Dark Thoughts on Broadway

ARE the plays on Broadway as black as painted? And is the average quite contemptible? Will the best of them, when they have run their course, return for a second hearing in days to come? And will they then be of musty taste? We can know at most that a half dozen pieces each year provide an honest entertainment or offer a problem for dispute. They are worth, perhaps, the shrunken dollars we pay for them. Against the wage a householder pays a plumber for daubing up a room some of them seem even to be a bargain.

And if no sharp dramatic heights rise from the general plain, we must remember that our mediocrity is much the same as the mediocrity of other days—the days of puffed sleeves, of horse-

hair furniture, hoop skirts, knee breeches, powdered wigs and snuff. When all is said, there are few periods which have produced great plays. Some few plays seem great to an audience because of the genius of an actor, but they fade when another actor takes the part. We may wrap ourselves in this slight comfort.

Plays of conspicuous merit are rare on any stage, and even one or two marks a period above its fellows. It is only in a golden age that they blossom out in clusters. It is only a golden age which draws its will and leaves a legacy for future use. For no kind of creative writing is so entirely directed to its contemporary audience. The best novels and poems endure to inspire another generation, but plays usually die with the actors who produced them.

And when great plays are plentiful it is because some inherent condition forces genius to the stage. It may be the lack of other opportunity. Perhaps other forms of expression have not yet been discovered, as was the case before the novel. Perhaps, through narrow education, there is a scarcity of reading public to support a volume. A certain amount of bookishness is necessary to enjoy a book, whereas the theater is patent to the eye. It may not appeal to the ignorant and yet it will grip the unlettered. Or there may be a difficulty of transport that retards the spread of written letters. In such times a cart and players

travel faster than a publication. There may be an absence of other and cheap entertainment. If we were bare of movies and motors, of baseball and swimming beaches, of music and radio, it might prove a tonic to the stage. Or perhaps a closely centered population—a great throng that itches for entertainment—gives the theater an unusual chance to serve the multitude. We have men to-day who can sing with as high a note as Massinger or Marlowe, but it is not the stage that draws them. In our more diverse and restless age there are so many mediums for expression, and the theater's monopoly is broken. Periods of license, moreover, favor the stage; and when circumstance fosters genius which is a bit rowdy it is the stage that profits. In most of these conditions, except perhaps the last—we have rowdiness enough—, we see our difference from Elizabethan times when genius sparkled upon the noisy Bankside or in the muddy fields of Finsbury. Perhaps, as the average generations go, we are not by comparison entirely destitute of worthy plays. If our plays interest us, that is about all that can be said for most decades. Most dramatic periods have been considered by their contemporaries richer than they really were; and, when the chest was opened and the will was read, little was found for legacy.

The better novels and poems live, an essay now and then or book of history; but try to name

twenty plays in English of the nineteenth century that hold to a present audience their freshness and their message! It is ridiculous how often we turn to Goldsmith and Sheridan, for want of later comedies to revive. Fetch down an encyclopedia and skim through the lives of Betterton, Garrick, Siddons, Kean and Kemble—I select the names at random—and learn how few plays of their splendid repertories can hold or deserve to hold the stage to-day. *Rip Van Winkle* died with Jefferson. *Jekyll and Hyde* with Mansfield. *The Bells* with Irving. Instances are thick. It was the tolling of an actor's funeral that rang these curtains down. Did not Boucicault write several scores of plays? Tom Taylor and Sheridan Knowles! They are as dead as Steele, as Addison and Farquhar. The dramatist, with but a few exceptions, writes for the audience before him, and there is no shelf too high when his day is done. He may, of course, write literary plays and these may endure coldly in his collected works, but it is dollars to doughnuts that they failed when he put them on the stage. Good acting plays, unfortunately, are bits of carpentry; and like all carpentry the timbers rot.

When in a mood for literature we stay at home, and it is our pleasant vices that lead us to a theater. Its attendance is a dissipation, a carnival to spice the week. It is a night out, and we assert our baser nature. It is for the library that we reserve

our culture and we go to the theater at a whim more wayward. The greatest scholar of my acquaintance was addicted to a minstrel show and, when it fell from fashion, he stayed at home and gave his nights to Roman history. To fill our gayer hours we have inherited the bear garden rather than the Globe.

I am myself frank to say that when I go to the theater I leave my blue stockings at home and am prepared for an easy interest and entertainment. Plays quite mediocre in themselves, if acted with spirit, hold me to a final curtain. I conceive their worn contrivance to be real, their situations new although the dusty years are on them, their emotion genuine even when it touches sentiment. Nor am I a prude entirely to a kick. Moreover I have been reformed in so many ways in these uplifted years that I cannot surrender myself to further tinkering. The theater is the last stand for the defense of our rowdy mood, and I shall fall in harness at the storming of the wall.

And yet our theater is mediocre and should be reformed. We are waiting for a great play; and I am told that producers stand at their windows on the lookout for a sturdy fellow who shall bulge with manuscript and genius.

If he bulged with a novel of genius some publisher would discover and welcome him. But I hold a doubt of the producers. And yet it is not

fair and just to hold the producer to the standard of the publisher. The commercial venture of a book is comparatively slight, and an average profit for the publisher may be assured by the variety of his season's output. He places, as it were, a great many small coins on the wheel of chance and he is not stripped when some of them are swept away. It is possible for him to keep but half his glance upon his purse and to gamble at the uncertain throw of genius. But a producer must stack his pile upon a single number. *Faites vos jeus, messieurs!* It is all or nothing. Were a publisher to print but a short half dozen books a year, he, too, might prove a miser to the arts. And, of course, if the general public—you and I who love a kick and capering chiffon—were of loftier judgment the artistic and financial problems would merge to safety. But it will be a prudish world that denies itself entirely to frolic of this kind.

Producers seem generally to be of two kinds. The first of these is frankly commercial and he seeks to give good value of a pattern to his patrons' taste. Probably he wishes that taste were better in order that he might safely launch a more worthy venture. But he must meet, in part, that carnival spirit I told you of and sprinkle pepper on our sober week. The second class of producers aim to improve the stage, and at the worst they try upon it a questionable experiment and fall to mere

novelty. And I think sometimes I would rather go to hell in the merry company of capering

"—capering Zion . . . Christian angels"

Zion than to endure a purple heaven with Christian angels in flowing ties and sandals.

But the commercial producer follows too much the groove of safety. Let us say that a play dealing with the detection of crime is scoring a success. On the hint, each manager, with a shrewd ear for the crowd upon the pavement, produces a play in similar fashion to catch an echoing profit of its vast attendance. The play, consequently, must be frankly an imitation, and furthermore it must be produced in haste before the fashion changes. All of this breeds authors who are hangers-on of the theater and who gain a ridiculously large income by a sharp perception of a current whim and a nimble pen. No outsider can hope to be quite conversant with the hints and methods of this quick procedure, and if he be of original brain he will not consent to work in so tight

a harness. I have no doubt, if roofs were lifted, that we would find right now the whole of Grub Street dipping their pens in the blood of some great success still running.

Many authors, also, are of fiber too sensitive for Broadway's hurly-burly. They value their peace of mind. They can throw their thoughts into the chapters of a novel and when their pages issue in a book there has been no alien tampering. Broadway, I am told, spits upon its hands and improves the plot. The author's tender child, nourished fiercely around Times Square, clambers from its cradle with a beard. This chafes a man whose rind is soft and he turns in his writing to more congenial circumstance.

The vice of imitation is one extreme. The other lies with the theatrical reformer who sickens at our general uniformity and insists on novelty alone. He throws out of consideration every play that suggests even mildly what has been done before, and he breeds a race of writers who spend their time in cutting out new and often absurd paths. Now in novelty, of course, there must be a touch of originality; and yet the heart of it may be mechanical. No writer is deeply original who studiously follows a path or who studiously neglects it. This last is a perversity of talent, a desire to be always in a minority of thought, to be always in the van no matter where the procession heads. He will jump from a precipice if only he may be first.

We are, therefore, given novelties in which insects are the actors. Or the world is not wide enough and a scene or two is laid beyond its gates with Peter at a Monday's court. There was a play made of automatons of wire and wheels. I am told that a few years ago an author, frantic after something that had not been tried before, put his play in a great red stomach. His characters were foods that entered through the gullet, and the plot was the gassy process of digestion. Mince Pie, I fancy, was the villain. This play is certainly novel, but it may not be the work of creative originality. Nor would I suggest a theme of disordered kidneys or broken inside plumbing. Novelty seeks chiefly to startle our judgment and emotion. To a world that tires of mild and wholesome drink it offers a hot-spiced brew. In this there lies barrenness and disillusion.

To gain this novelty producers are naturally led to foreign authors, inasmuch as a distant viewpoint is usually counter to our own. And in a measure this is right. But to cater to our jaded appetites they seek too often the writings of disillusioned countries, decadent and clamorous for change. We have been blinded by the flash of foreign reputation—plays mediocre in translation—and we have considered that what is merely unusual is genius. Of this kind of play I can think of no better example than "Six Characters in Search of an Author." It is of slight importance

that they found him. It is the work, I believe, of a jaded writer who tried all plots and at last in extremity turned to mere novelty for relief. I believe in the free trade that admits a foreign play, but we should pay no bonus for tired mediocrity.

And now that we have settled these hard questions once and for all, what shall we do to-night? Shall it be Pirandello or a show of capering chiffon? I vote, God help me, for the kick.

"—I vote, God help me, for the kick!"

"—a kingdom that is his no more"

Conrad in Further Quest

CONRAD in quest of his youth was a ridiculous figure and after his encounter with the ghosts of faded beauty that he had known in their better freshness we leave him ripe for further disenchantment as the story ends. There he sits, frayed and shiny at his teacup, waiting for the naughty creature who will renew his youth, when the final page breaks off. It is in this same fashion, but with a hotter scandal, that Sterne in his sentimental travels teases the reader in an incompleted chapter.

It is not given to many of us to turn back the years successfully; yet we must be pardoned if now and then we try to recapture a departed pleasure. A man of middle age, at a circus on a child's excuse, sees a kingdom that is his no more. On his journey to the years of twilight he sets his back against the horses and in the dust of his

departed road he sees the cloud of old desires. Peaks rise on the horizon of his past to glisten till the sunset fire be out.

When my neighbor, in cool green frock that matched the April lawn, signaled to me yesterday from the curb to beg a lift, she asked what I had been doing lately. And I told her in a burst of partial confidence—what coldly I had thought to keep a secret—that I had borrowed my nephew's bicycle and had gone for a ride. But I held it locked inside that I had pedaled on the deserted paths of memory. Yet my journey was innocence itself and did not lead me to a faded shrine of worship. No woman went tandem in my thought and my dreams were streaked with a thread of sober gray. Somewhere in my meditation there arose a silver world, but I did but fringe upon it.

I lied, for I had bought a wheel.

In the first place, I had inquired among my half-breached acquaintance, who are expert in such matters, what was now the *dernier cri;* for I wanted my wheel to be in the swim of fashion. In my own youth the Columbia had won our almost universal suffrage. Now and then a lad asserted his perversity by buying another make, but he was grilled in its defense and must have blushed in secret like a boy in baggy pants when fashion cuts them tight.

By what stealthy advertisement from mouth to

mouth are these popularities maintained? No printed word flaunting on a page seems to spread their fame, yet their reputation runs from street to street and jumps the farthest countryside like a happy plague. It is a swifter gossip than women or teacups know. Beyond a doubt there is to-day a brand of baseball—in my time a *cock-of-the-walk*—a catcher's mit, a make of sled, a kind of skate, that meets the shrill and universal plaudits of a thousand neighborhoods. I doubt whether housewives, despite the assurance of many bill-boards, really meet on a common flour or baking-powder; and there is certainly a pretty rivalry in shoes and silk. But children, although they are of vigorous opinion and independence, are unanimous in choice upon their tools of sport and they cry down all upstart competition that begs a hearing.

It was once the fashion when we shopped for wheels to go among a dozen dealers. We knew already, in the secrecy of our inmost hearts, what make of wheel we would select; and our quest was no more than the pretense of an open mind. In the delight of this shopping on a holiday we stuffed our pockets with boastful catalogues to the ruin of our clothes. These booklets were printed on shiny paper to do full justice to their wares and they announced as often as the year came round that now at last their product had reached the top of human ingenuity. And to-day, as I read

a motor catalogue, I find the old phrases are still repeated; for the daughter of a coquette is herself a flirt and the pleasant lies have bred families of their own complexion. When King Solomon went to buy a chariot to take the Queen of Sheba on an airing the rival outcry of perfection was just as shrill—open body or closed, brake and hub and cushions!—and from this sharp lineage we are descended.

We studied these bicycle catalogues in school behind our geographies instead of applying ourselves coldly to the boundaries of Ohio or the fur-bearing animals of North America. And up to the very moment when we announced our choice—dickering still with the patient salesman—we spun the pedals to know if they were set on honest bearings and demanded the weight to the last scruple of an ounce. Many a salesman was a famous rider with a badge upon his waistcoat, yet in these matters we met him as an equal. I forget whether the Amazon or the Mississippi is the king of rivers, but I still remember that my first wheel was on roller bearings and was geared to fifty-four by computation of the sprockets, that my second was sixty-three and my third seventy-two. We looked with envy on champions strong enough to push a ninety-six, but none of us possessed the muscle. And these wheels carried no mudguards, which were effeminate things for girls. A dirty streak upon the back was the sign of our

enfranchisement. For lightness we chose racing saddles, despite the sharpness of their bounce, and removed even the step from the rear wheel.

All this is changed. There are now no bicycle catalogues to spice a dull classroom hour, for the salesman takes but a greasy price-sheet from his hip. There are no rings where one is taught to ride—perhaps with a merry band on Saturdays—and one must suppose that lads know the mystery of balance by dim inheritance, just as ducks take to water with little practice. Nor is the bicycle any longer an aristocrat sold by champions in an exclusive shop; for you buy it to-day in a dull democracy of nails and lawn mowers, of garden tools and children's dolls and music boxes. No salesman knows the gear, the weight, the manner of the bearings, or any of these facts of prime importance. Not even a pig is sold so entirely in a poke. The cheapest rascal of our street with patched breeches and one suspender would have hung his head to expose such ignorance.

The present bicycle scorns our old simplicity and is tricked out with all manner of incumbrance. Double frames and forks, electric lights and batteries, standing tripods and guards and heavy saddles with coils of springs hanging in a girlish curl —these have the suffrage wherever youth gathers for boastful gossip. The sled has not undergone a change so monstrous. Time was when we chose a belly-slammer—I must not shrink from an

ugly word—and high sleds were painted with rosebuds and left for girls. We, in those braver days, wished to be found dead on a high sled. But now lads of stout virility—or has the age grown pink?—sit aloft on flexible fliers like the petticoats of thirty years ago.

Behind my garage an alley parallels our street, and I slipped out by this postern in a kind of fright to avoid my neighbors' windows. We are brave in larger matters, but in such a small convention as bars us from riding a bicycle we are cowards; and I have heard it said that a man who would charge a lion will shiver at the thought of wearing an evening suit with brass buttons on the tail. A man was cutting grass to a merry tune and a laundress with clothespins in her mouth hung out Monday's dancing wash. Both of them gave me shrewd and silly glances, but I rode by with what dignity I had. I thought I detected the sly twitching of a lacy curtain, as if Godiva took to horse. I wobbled a bit among the ash-cans that infest our alley and once I fell against the fence; and then the great world opened at the street.

I had thought that the city was flat but I found at once that it ran up hill and down. Astride a carpenter's level I could not so nicely have gauged the slope and rise. I discovered next that I no longer belonged to the criminal class. This is a subtle thing but unmistakable. Any motorist is

potentially a breaker of the law. If his foot falls too heavily on the gas he is cousin to the burglar, but with a sharper hazard of arrest; and if one

"—with clothespins in her mouth"

eye seeks the hilltop for its beauty the other must guard against policemen that trail and mark his speed. But a cyclist is an angel washed clean of

sin and even on a downward grade traffic men look at him with a friendly eye. It is a fine thing to feel so pure.

A cyclist discovers, also, that he has changed his social station. He gazes with an even eye on those who labor by the road and becomes the crony of gardeners and butcher boys. He is an easy brother to overalls and flannel shirt, and they admit his kinship without reserve. In an hour more persons of diverse sort will speak to him than in a week of haughty motor travel. For instance, resting for a moment on the curb, a workman told me that cycling was his wife's chief amusement, that she weighed two hundred and twenty pounds—ninety-seven pounds more than when he married her. Bloat! he said, and she had left off sweets and pudding. He remarked this with a regretful glance to the slender days when he had courted her. I cite these particulars of her swelling bulk merely to show our sudden intimacy. Then the poor fellow touched his chest and told me that he had just recovered from a fever and that his lungs were bad. He was an electrician but his physician had sent him to work outdoors. Not to be outdone in confidence I told him that once I had been a wasp myself and was pedaling to bring back my youthful waist. We wished one another good luck toward our joint recovery and then, with a gesture to the welfare of his wife, I journeyed on. May

he again be able to bounce her in comfort on his knee!

There were many motors on the road but they seemed to move in a world apart—arrogant creatures that pushed me to the gutter. I saw them at the tail of my eye and judged their passengers as lazy folk who shirked the labor of the world. It is somewhat thus, peeping from beneath at gilded wealth, that a revolutionist looks on richer persons, padded in satisfaction, who cling like limpets to the workers of the world; and to him their snarling honk is monseigneur's selfish warning on the swift road that is ended by the guillotine. Once, to my peril, a motor cut in front of me, and I have notched the rascal on my tablets as a victim for the knife when ancient scores are settled.

For safety I pedaled along the gutter and I found it strewed with detritus thrown from the faster bevel of the road. Nuts, bolts, broken parts of motors, bits of tire, cigarette wrappers, dead birds, marked the wastage of swifter travel.

Our huge city stretches eastward like the shadow of a giant at sunset and it was an hour before I escaped the denser traffic and came to the breath of country. Here I lay on a grassy pitch beside the road, for every muscle cried out with its own complaint. A maple stood above me in its first verdure of the spring, with sky showing between the branches as blue as the Madonna's robe. The

"—to be apprenticed to the summer clouds"

wind, which a moment since had seemed to blow spitefully against my face, now sang a lazy tune among the leaves. Far off across the meadows a train raced by with tiny clatter and sent up its white smoke to be apprenticed to the summer clouds. Some day I shall build my house upon a hilltop where a railway shall fringe my fields. And here, in contented slippers, I shall watch its swift shuttle that weaves the pattern of our world.

The road was now torn up for about a mile and I walked with my wheel bouncing by my side. A dog or two came out to sniff, but I told each of them how good a dog he was and passed on unmolested. It is such compliment as this on the roads of our general world that smooths the way. My manners to a dog rise with his width of jaw and the sturdy penetration of his eye. Willoughby in a mile or so is a lovely but uneven town of older settlement, and the elms along its streets are the same as thirty years ago when once I cycled there and looked upon it as a foreign city. There is now a clattering street car through the town. The schoolhouse is new. A rusty cannon with its pyramid of iron balls is replaced by a newer gun from the Spanish war, but the wooden bandstand is still the same with its shabby promise of music that is never kept.

At a soda fountain—they really were fountains once, with water spouting from the mouths of marble cupids under glass—I ordered a milk-

shake, because that drink linked me sentimentally with the past; and I was rewarded by finding that it is still known. Indeed, two lads were swigging at their milky cups as I came in. A toothless relic wandered around the shop and I asked him if he remembered having served a shake once upon a time to four small rascals who pedaled out to see the world. One with torn breeches and a scar upon the knee! Thirty years ago and more! But milk-shakes were too common in his life and he met me with a vacant stare. He was a ghost of Conrad's youth that declined to walk. The drink is no more than a few drops of vanilla shaken in a glass of milk, but my gullet recalled pleasantly its frothy taste. The price, however, has jumped from five to fifteen cents, and youth nowadays must be of bloated wealth.

Beyond Willoughby a high stone bridge is thrown across the valley of the Chagrin River which at this season was busy with its gossip of the spring, and I stopped to look across the rail at the former weary road that once trudged up hill and down and caught our breath. The valley here, as it nears the lake, is shallow, but it deepens to the south and neither June nor October spares its gaudy paint on meadow and on woods. I have seen in autumn a purple mist unparalleled rising from the hills above the straw of ripened fields. We who live near-by maintain that this valley is cousin to the Berkshires. Across the rail I saw a lad

who was once myself trudging up the slope of the lower road, but a motor-load of golfers waved at me in sheer amazement and the older canvas dissolved to a present scene.

At the town of Mentor I was almost twenty-five miles from home, so here I stopped with great satisfaction at my achievement. My appetite, also, had been whetted by a frequent roadside notice of a certain "pleasant cottage" where food was offered, and this was in Mentor. It is a rich little village of city folk who summer here and it boasts the home of President Garfield, which still lingers in the family to brag of spacious days. It is a frame house of hospitable size in wooded grounds and it stands in friendly contact with the street, which was once the post road from the east. Sunny meadows all about lie against the town with great suburban buildings at the top; and here and there a white New England farmhouse binds us to the time when this was the Western Reserve and ox carts journeyed from Connecticut to give Ohio its best culture and tradition.

It was only lately that a dear old lady told me how her father's family in those early days traveled to the west in a wagon loaded with their general wealth and a great iron kettle that was used for the family wash swinging underneath. The towns were far apart and they cooked their meals beside the road. After one of these stops for food, the wagon having now plowed through several miles

of heavy mud, it was discovered that a child was missing. A careful count among a dozen told the loss beyond a doubt. Had a youngster been left in the hurry of the start? Had she wandered from the caravan to be stolen by a prowling Indian? Or had she bounced out at a larger jolt? There was nothing to do but turn the tired horses east. But no child was found and the count was still short its littlest finger. And now, when the excitement had risen to a shrill pitch, a tiny snore proceeded from beneath the wagon. And there the child was found, curled inside the iron kettle, lulled to sleep in her swinging cradle.

I sat on the veranda of the pleasant cottage, and leaning against the rail I streaked my back with fresh white paint; than I went inside for coffee and sandwiches. The little daughter of the house was my waitress and she trotted here and there to fill me. It is this large appetite after exercise that works against my beauty. The harder I labor to grind myself away, the faster does nature toil to pad me up again. I thought of the slim workman I had met upon the road, and I sighed in dreadful meditation of his swelling wife.

At Willoughby, on my return, I rested again in the town's park while the school bell drew the children into class. Boys came by and admired my shiny wheel and spun its pedals in agreement that it was top-hole. Then an old man limped up to share my bench. His whiskers were stained

with tobacco and his skin was leathery and yellow. He was the town's most ancient citizen and he looked for someone who had not heard the story of his life. "Do you remember, my dear sir," I asked, "Cleveland's Union Depot when it was new?" And he answered that its ancient walls that now totter in the dirt were once the finest between Chicago and New York. He recalled the fountain in the lobby of the Kennard House with fishes swimming in the pool, the Academy of Music where Booth and Barrett and Clara Morris played. He remembered the flats of lumber and of ships, before the viaduct was thrown across. Of days less remote he told of the electric light mast in the Public Square that topped all groveling buildings, of the mechanical ship that sailed upon its pond. These last things I remembered, too, and Conrad's ghost stalked out from the tobacco juice that stained his lips.

He was lost for a moment in his thoughts. "Do you see that white house across the street?" he asked. "Dr. Chase used to live there. He owned two cherry trees, but the birds ate the cherries before he could get a bite. He had nothing to do but sit on his porch and read the morning paper, and he was always in a stew, shooing at the birds. But one day he hung a dinner bell in each tree and tied a string between, and then he hitched on another string and tied it to the leg of his chair. And after that, as he sat and

rocked, the bells jingled in the branches and kept the birds away. Smart man, the Doc!" And at this the old man paused in meditation and shot a dribble of tobacco from between his teeth.

I gathered up my wheel and started home. At every little downward slope my rubber tire whirred its pleasant tune upon the silent road. And now the smoke that drifted out of chimneys turned with me toward the city as if it had a movie in its mind. On a bicycle one is quick to catch the direction of the wind, and to travel with the smoke is to go on an easy journey.

And now I am home again, and my brain is filled with the pretty pictures of my excursion. No naughty creature have I conjured up, like Conrad, from the past; but tucked within my head is the memory of other days, and my thoughts are sharp with the happy heritage of youth.

"—to travel with the smoke is to go on an easy journey"

"—the owners . . . are dead, and off the premises"

In Defense of Plagiarism

I WONDER that plagiarism is not more common. It is a theft so much easier than the forcing of a lock; and most of the owners, moreover, are dead and off the premises. A deserted house with windows shattered is not so open to a thief.

I never wander through the corridors of a public library without reflecting that there must be thousands of books unknown to anyone that are, nevertheless, worth a careful pillage. I do not think, of course, that one could lift an entire book with safety. A whole novel, certainly, would betray one; nor could it be whittled to a successful marketing because of our altered taste. Masterpieces aside, there are few stories of the past that now could find a sale. Some musty flavor

would tell against them. Were my own publishers so ignorant as not to have read Horace Walpole and Anne Radcliffe—famous authors in their time—I would like to submit one of their novels on a bet and offer odds on its rejection. Even Sir Walter Scott—except for a half dozen of his best—would consume stamps in fruitless travel.

Be this as it may, I have no doubt that paragraphs might be pilfered from a dozen musty essayists—petty larceny, at most, like an apple from a fruit stand—and thrown together with padding and altered phrase to furnish out a volume that would be accepted without detection. Bread would be taken from no one's mouth and a shiny volume with blurb and scarlet jacket would be offered for one that is thick with dust. In all innocence it would be an exchange of new lamps for old.

As it is, right now in purest honesty, with hands upon their hearts, our scholars do this; and if they give thanks in a foreword, like an epitaph upon a grave, they think it is enough. What is a new history of Rome but a patient sorting from an index and the collocation of accepted facts? One needs only to shuffle the trivial pieces of a picture and match their curves to reconstruct an empire. We have ourselves—when lately a puzzle of this sort was the fashionable plaything on our street—built up Old King Cole from a thousand parts hardly less confusing. Observe a general reading

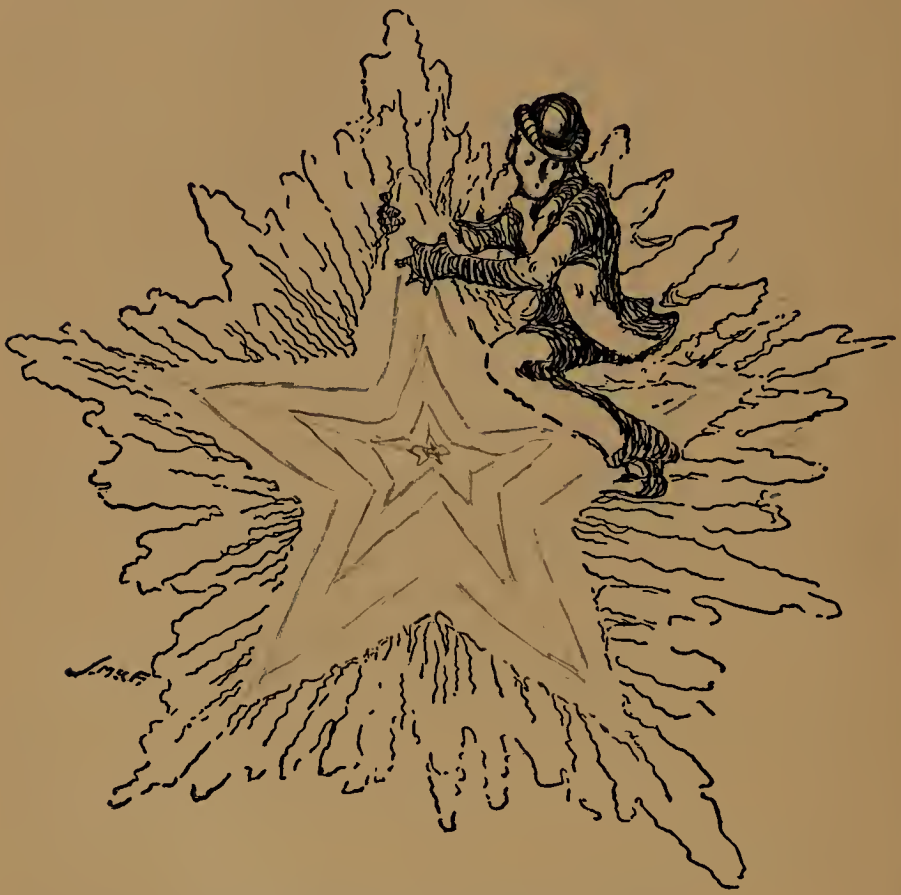
room in one of our stiffer libraries and you will see students as busy as bees rifling the flower of former scholarship. I seem to have read once a story of Washington Irving in which the portraits around the bookstacks of the British Museum suddenly came to life to protect their property—it was a dream, no doubt,—and they raised such a hubbub that the students went scampering for their lives.

There are so many books that one would wish to have written. They flow so evenly to our present thoughts. I am amazed at our honesty when a theft would be so easy.

I know a man of pretty literary turn, who, nevertheless, strangely enough, does not write. His meditation takes a poetic tinge, but a lazy disposition holds him from throwing his thought to paper. Being, therefore, childless of printed offspring of his own, he is pleased to adopt such small waifs of writing as have pleased him most. Of course he does not publicly assert his paternity to raise a scandal around his ears; but in his mind's eye he sees his own name on the title-page and draws in ghostly reverie a profit and advantage. His is a method in the craft of letters that is without its dirtier sweat and danger of rejection.

He tells me that if ever he be set down on Mars or other planet ignorant of our local authors—for strange humor fills his head—he will copy from memory these purple patches and dispatch them as

original to the Martian editors to reap a golden reputation. In a slow and thrifty trickle he will send his stolen wares lest old age with tottering recollec-



"—if ever he be set down on Mars"

tion shall find him bankrupt with empty notebook. The coming generation of our twinkling neighbors of the night, may lift him yet to high esteem as the author of Shakespeare's sonnets—the better ones in the middle of the series—of much of Keats and Shelley,

of *Travels with a Donkey* and the *Lantern Bearers*, of a poem now and then by Browning, of a page or so from Addison and Lamb and of a hundred other volumes housed in his recollection whose names he will not reveal. And if ever he books for a journey in the air—be it no more than a flight across the English Channel—he plans to pack his grip with a bundle of his favorites, on the chance that the course be lost and his ship put in at some celestial port.

He may be right, for the mere scribbling of books is such a futile business, and already there are too many. It was worth one's while to write a book in the middle ages when they were scarce, and to set a monk to painting a rubric on the parchment. A book then was an achievement that marked a man. But now it is a disease rather than an art; and, if it be chronic, no pill is sufficient for a cure. Let a man but keep to his desk for ten years and, with broken will, he is bound forever to his ink-pot. Not even a circus calls its victims in the spring with such insistence.

There are so many books already. The maker of tinned goods for supper has at least the satisfaction that a hungry week will drain his shelves and, as he hears the rumble of his engines, he knows that he is only keeping pace to the consumption. A shoe-man listens to the tapping on the pavement and he speeds his product. A suit of clothes is rubbed to lint and descends to be a

patch on newer finery. Front-room carpets mount the kitchen stairs. Pianos are worn out and thrown away. Pins, despite the jingle that we should pick them up, seep forever into mother earth. But a book—the mere ink and cloth and paper of the thing—lasts forever, even if it be smothered in a barrel. When persons turn yellow they lean toward death, but a book lives in a shabby immortality and holds its wrinkles against Methuselah.

Authors, I fear, in the class and aggregate are misers. They know that their general pile already bursts the granary, and yet they fetch and carry like patient ants, and sweat and labor to add a mite to the prodigious unused heap. If the most zealous student were promised a thousand years to complete his learning he would despair at nibbling down the midden that is stacked before him, and at the end he would find the topmost shelf untouched and the lower volumes quite forgotten. And yet our silly publishers cackle like rival hens every time a new volume is dropped from the presses to the straw. And a thousand little fellows strut about in flowing ties, as if they were the saviors of mankind and common folk existed by their pilfered wisdom.

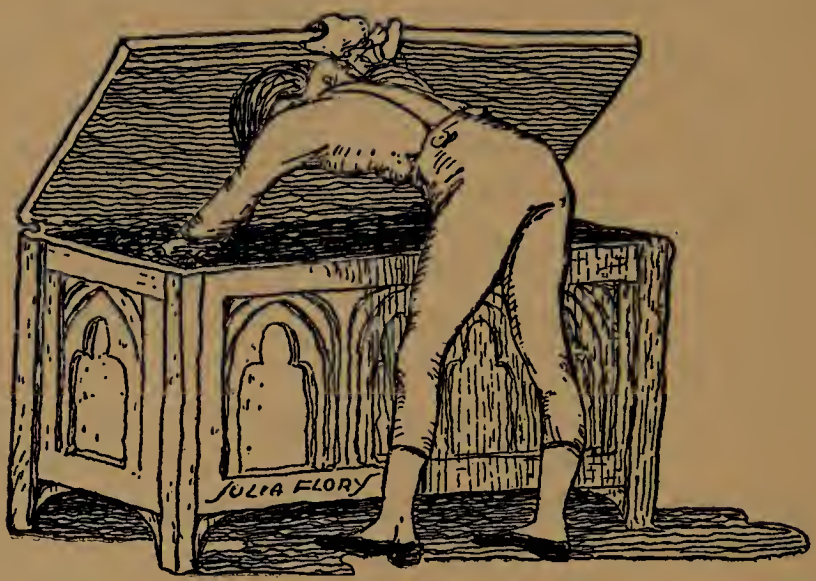
Was it Hazlitt who said that he read an old book every time a new one appeared before him? The rascal has our sympathy. In his attempt to keep his word, it is no wonder that he turned

bitter and lived sourly with his wife. Ten thousand books, beyond a doubt,—exclusive of Buick catalogues and steamship pamphlets (excellent literature, for they may be eased off the end of the desk in their virgin wrappers and burned unread)—ten thousand books, I repeat, were printed last year in America alone. And there was an equal flood from Germany, Italy, France and England. Not even our pension of the Civil War grows so fast. Reports from Somaliland have not come in, yet we look for something big to engage our winter evenings.

I have been told that a half dozen pianists are enough to supply our highest concert stage—a half dozen violinists and sopranos—and that singers beyond that number, even if they be of silver throat, must lack a larger audience and band themselves in choirs to get a hearing. A parallel is true with authors. Let Congress set ten at most upon a pedestal and muzzle all the rest of us! Then, when the itch shall seize us, in mercy we may be permitted—like my silent meditative friend—to copy down a bit of ancient verse for our own delight and quickly destroy the paper lest it thicken the clutter on our shelves.

I was thinking along these lines when Thomas Chatterton popped to mind. His was a different kind of plagiarism and it did not spring from an open vanity to see his name in print. As a child of less than fourteen years, being apprenticed

to a Bristol lawyer, he rummaged in off hours through the aisles and towers of St. Mary Redcliffe which stood around the corner from his

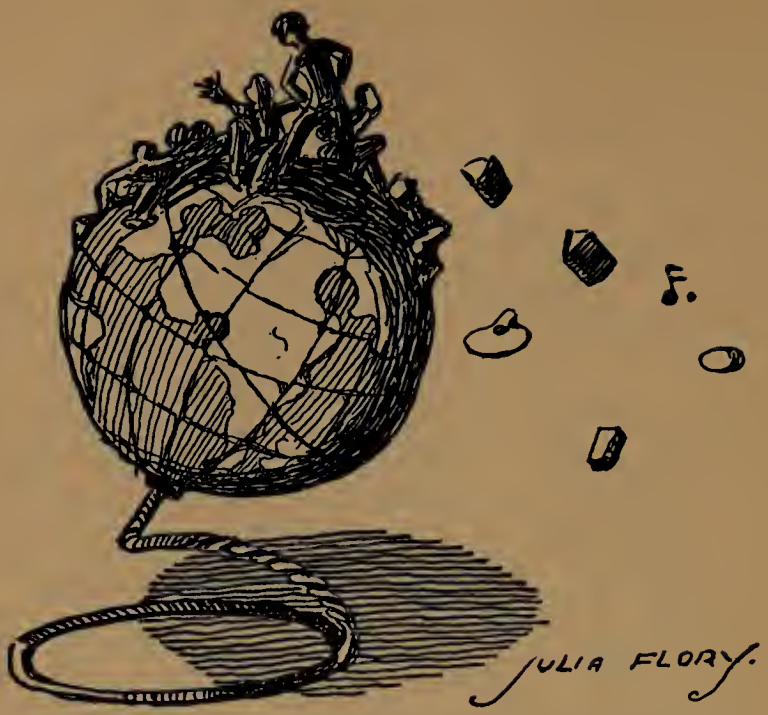


"—he . . . discovered a sheaf of poems"

stool. An uncle had been a caretaker, so he was given a free run of the building. Presently he announced that he had discovered a sheaf of poems by an ancient priest named Rowley. It was pure invention. What he really found was a bundle of parchment in the muniment room—old records stored in a musty chest. Being of poetic and antiquarian imagination—an amazing genius in a child—he wrote new verses on the parchment in archaic words and spelling, then smudged the parchment in a candle until the ink faded in the heat. This was done in an attic of his house,

with door locked against intrusion. He was soon in correspondence with Horace Walpole—a heavy swell in London—seeking patronage and the expense of publication. Nor was the cheat so apparent and so grossly executed but that he obtained credit for a time that his discovery was real. It is certain that whiskered chins all around the country were at first in great perplexity, and one stiff history of Bristol was written giving great space to these false legends of the town. Now that the dust of a hundred years and more has settled on this controversy of Rowley, we may only wonder at the genius of the child and speculate as to what heights of poetry he would have risen if he had not starved in London when barely eighteen years of age.

But this is by the way. I had at hand a pretty sheaf of thoughts on plagiarism, but it is quite likely that I stole them from the books of other writers. And the fact remains that there are too many books already—too many novels, too many histories, too many essays and those that exist are too long. Of this one beneath my pen I shall spare you a last dozen pages.



The World is so Full of a Number of Things

THE other evening a sudden question was put to me whether I favored the woman's peace parade. I answered at once that I was heartily behind it although, to be sure, I did not know very much about it. It was a step in the right direction and all that sort of thing. But I must confess now that beyond a headline in the morning paper I know nothing whatsoever about it and have not given it a thought. It appears that the parade has been opposed by those who see in it a bit of Russian propaganda and the work of pacifists.

Hardly had I avoided exposure of my ignorance about this parade, than someone asked what we thought of the new French premier and from him we shot to Ramsay Macdonald and then to Ireland. For a year our local paper has been strangely silent over Ireland, but I am not informed whether Elysium now reigns at Dublin, or whether the rival parties have come to grips and both are dead. I shifted uneasily until Ireland was disposed of. We next took a fling at Russia and nearly came to blows. We now ranged around Einstein and tried our hands at time and space and a fourth dimension. Freud was next and then for a moment we skirted on vitamins and calories. And did I think that sauerkraut was a universal cure, as buttermilk was once? Or how about monkey glands? And would a lifted cheek stay up indefinitely or need presently another reef?

There was now a resting space among the intellectuals, while certain lower persons talked of liquor and exchanged a few safe addresses; and then we all flew to Lenin and a discussion whether he were a person for history to remember. And Wilson? And Roosevelt? And had Mary Baker Eddy or Mme. Curie done the larger service to mankind?

A half dozen gripping novels came next, none of which I had read. I had, however, seen a review of one of them, and I made the most of my shallow knowledge. And the crop of plays on

Broadway! Being now adrift on art—which has its flat-foot home on Broadway—we floated next to local matters and discussed whether the conductor of our orchestra is best in Beethoven or Brahms, and what we thought of the Choral Symphony. Next came city politics and we quarreled whether a manager would cure our faults. To cool ourselves from these heated subjects we dipped again in gin—figuratively, of course,—and turned to prophecy of the rise and fall of stocks.

Now the amazing thing is that we were a roomful of persons no higher than the average and that no one of us had the slightest real knowledge on any of the subjects of which he spoke so glibly. A gossip of one's neighbors and all spread of scandal is judged poor taste. And yet here we were, peddling out our ignorance in cheapest vanity, pronouncing sharp opinions with finality, upsetting a kingdom and the motion of the stars and slapping one another, meantime, on the back and telling ourselves what smart folk we were.

I am quite appalled by what I am expected to know. Perhaps there was a time once when knowledge was enough if it swept across the village, but the brain has become a noisy terminal for the products of the world. If a presidency falls vacant we must know at supper the direction of the future. When a revolution springs to light we must get its purpose in an hour and be glib with names. If a discovery is made in higher

calculus we must not be struck dumb in ignorance, but must chatter of it behind our soup.

"I am sorry, madam," I replied, "that I know little of Lenin and less of Millerand. I have no head for vitamins or calories. I have forgotten who is now the president of Ireland, or whether he wears a bowler or a crown. It has slipped my mind whether Czecho-Slovakia has a king. I am sorry, but the Black Shirts of Italy are outside my knowledge. I have never been informed who is our present Secretary of Agriculture, nor do I know how many tons of free seeds he sends to his constituency. Give me a moment to think and I shall tell you the name of my senator, but who my councilman is has gone forever. I have never been in Russia and, although I think it is filled with anarchists and steppes, I have not the precise knowledge that permits me to talk with entertaining fluency. And I have no theory about the women's peace parade as to whether it is the work of pacifists. I know nothing about it. I never heard of it until this morning. I know nothing about it —not any thing—not any single thing—nothing—absolutely nothing—ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!"

The world is so full of a number of things.

It is *so* full of a *number* of things. The wonder is that one small globe can hold them all. Ours is but a speck in the heavens, and I am glad I do not live on Orion whose problem in its larger space

would double up the trouble a million times. And if we keep up the pretense of being posted to the second on everything that happens even here on our insignificant little planet we shall certainly be carted off in a padded wagon to squeak and gibber through the streets.

"—like a December garment thrown aside"

Wind in the South

THE sun last night went down behind a bank of sullen clouds and winter lingered in the frosty air. I noticed yesterday at the early twilight that the penny-pickers on the way home from their city vineyards trotted briskly with collars buttoned to the chin against the shrewd breezes from the lake. Rain flashed upon the pavements in a swift staccato as if March were still blowing at the tune.

There was a roaring of the sky throughout the night, and the shrill legions of the north with undiminished siege still pelted us with cannon.

But this morning all is changed. Within the dark the wind shifted to the south and now in softer melody it drives the lagging foot of winter from the streets. A breath of sunny hills has

jaunted into town, with fragrant hedge and furrow like tourists booked in passage. Even a minute since the sky was overcast—for so sudden is the turning of the season—; but now the breeze has ripped apart the clouds like a December garment thrown aside, and has filled the rent with summer blue. White balloons, full-puffed, hang upon the housetops and strain upon their leash to start a journey.

I detect a sprouting of yellow buds in the forsythia bushes below my window. Daffodils beckon from the fence as if they knew the wind had shifted at their smiling invitation. My rain-drenched lawn sparkles in the sun. Angleworms crawl upon my walk with high mortality, and if robins had the thrifty habits of a squirrel they could stock at easy picking their larder for a leaner day of cold December. With ice and pantry they could dwell among us through the year. It is the robin's careless living—from shiftless claw, as it were, to beak—that drives him for the winter to the south.

A wheelbarrow, with trowel, rake and spade, starts work beyond the fence. A lawn mower whirs across my neighbor's grass. It must be that spring, tired at last of tardy wooing, has pushed winter from its lap. Even my pencil seems to have felt the change to a softer season, for all morning it has nodded at its task. It would rebel outright if I asked it to record a fact or any

weight of labored thought, and it consents to move only if I give it reign to drowsy meditation.

The turn of the weather sets me thinking of the summer months. Shall I keep scratching at my papers all through the heat to flood my patient publisher with nonsense in the autumn? This is the time of year when Christmas essays are composed—paragraphs that must seem of swift impromptu when the merry snowflakes fill the air. A New Year's plot, like the making of a woolen garment, is sweated best in the sultry days of August. Shall I dust off a broken novel in my desk and smooth its chapters to completion through the summer? It lies in a nest of scrawling interlineation that tires my head. Or shall I break my working day at noon to slice and abuse a golf ball in the sand traps? My play is practice only for a niblick.

Or shall I throw my scribblings to the discard and fling myself in happy vagrancy to Europe? At this pleasant prospect my pencil jerks with a sharp excitement, as if already it saw a ticket bought and heard the foggy whistle of my steamer outward bound. And here is a strange portent that I may not neglect. It is true, upon my word. No sooner had I written that previous sentence about a ticket to Europe, than my clothes strung near-by upon a sagging pole across my closet—suddenly!—without warning!—with no slightest creak of preparation!—sprang all at once to life

and fell forward with a dull thud upon the floor, pole and all. I must suppose that a restless spirit got within my trousers and, tugging hard to start the packing of my bags, brought down the line of garments to confusion. Those particular trousers went to Europe last summer in their newest gloss, and nostalgia doubtless worked upon them for the lights of Paris and a reckless journey up Montmartre. They had frisked to a merry one-step at the Chateau Madrid under a blare of pleasing jazz and had watched the moon rise among the trees to paint the midnight with a silver magic. I have not given credit to these trousers for a temper so sensitive to sport and beauty. There is more in this ghostly business than is dreamt of in my philosophy, and I look upon it as a prophecy for June.

And certainly, on a day like this when springtime smells in every hedge and the breath of flowers runs truant from the hills—certainly it is hard to keep away from my friend Casper who has a shop down town in thickest traffic as agent for all lines of ocean travel. In his window, as an early bait, there hung already through our windy March, a picture of the Aquitania sliced up the middle with cabins showing. Roundabout there lay a tempting show of steamship folders opened at their prettiest page of mountain and of castle. A certain sweep of upper deck invites the wayward thought to glistening summer seas. At night

I behold the mast steadfast among the swaying stars, as if the tipsy heavens reeled home from a tavern cup. Gleaming phosphorescence—little fishes in excitement—marks the vessel's side. I become a champion at ringtoss and shuffleboard, for youth returns at sea and plucks the beard. Or my fancy wraps me in a rug with a novel by Oppenheim—my favorite author for a lazy trip—and I hear the water racing at the rail.

Once inside his crafty web, Casper would persuade me by outrageous cunning to select a cabin on a slim deposit. He knows my taste—minimum if possible, toward the center of the boat where an uneasy stomach rides the flattest in a storm; for winds rise sometimes to sudden tempest even on the laughing seas of June. With these yellow blossoms bursting on my bushes and the breeze blowing its soft fragrance from the south I must stay away from his allurement, as a steamship diagram in color and Casper's sly persuasion would fan me to a fever. Saint Anthony was a better man than I, but I am told he was not proof to a great seduction.

Whereabouts in Europe would I go if I strolled down town and Casper caught me in his web? So? says my pencil. That 's the theme to-day! Give me a whirl in the sharpener! Now, master, I consent to write.

I might strike into fields unknown to me and pack my head for a book of travel. This world, built

raw within a week, now ripens through a score of thousand years for tourist pleasure and discovery. It is only a cobbler who should sit cross-legged through his life and be content in the patter of a narrow village. "If a man were not made to walk about and see the whole fair earth, of what use is such cunning jointry in his legs?" Roads run up the hills and cry to the mountain that they are coming. The ocean frets against the shore and escapes in restless tide to the misty kingdoms of the east.

At least I 'll bring down my bags and dust them off. I 'll look for straps and keys, and whet my appetite for June.

I have always wished to take a trip through southern France and to roam for a month of lazy holidays among the foothills of the Pyrenees. Avignon, Albi and Carcassonne! There is a softness in the syllables unparalleled in our harsher north; as if they were drenched in music and in sunlight—as if an older century of song defied the turning of the restless calendar and lingered here in peaceful cloister. The swifter noises of our present busy world run breathless and are lost among the stars, but these languid phrases of the south lay off their boots and dwell contentedly like an echo caught forever in the peaceful hills.

I can hardly wait to see Avignon where once the Catholic schism set up its rival throne. They tell me that its mighty palace sounds to an in-

structed fancy with the clamor of splendid days when a priest was the equal of a king and a nodding of the triple crown was potent for war or peace. All these ignorant years I have neglected Avignon, but now without further delay I must see this second chair of Peter that shook its ancient fist at Rome. An acquaintance lately bubbled up excitedly at the mere mention of Albi and he won my promise that I would journey there before

"—the angelus still rings at twilight"

I took to a toothless crutch. Perhaps the angelus still rings at twilight to hold the traffic to devotion in its silent streets. And I want to go to Carcassonne that stands like a yellow cloud against the setting sun. I want to listen to the troubadours whose melodies sound in fancy and woo a silent casement in the night. Among these mellow hilltop towers the rumble of our present life fades like an ocean that ebbs far out across the shallow sands.

Or Spain? A friend of mine goes there this summer and already he babbles of Madrid, Cordova and Seville, with a gesture to the Alhambra. If they prove too hot he will escape to San Sebastian to study the form and fashion of native bathing. Or, perhaps, somewhere, somehow, by a boat, by a bridge—his learning is not precise—he will cross to the Balearic Isles. He tells me that he has never heard of anyone who has been there; and this alone seems to be his persuasion, for I fear that he is snobbish in a noisy throng of tourists and stiff of nose among the rattling charabancs.

To locate the foreign names he slings at me I read last night what the Britannica had to say in volume *Shu to Sub.* Under such a celestial title I would expect to find something on China with soy and sub-gum noodles on the side; but the book contains the whole of Spain, and now I am prepared to meet him as an equal. I looked

up even the geology of the Iberian peninsula, if his challenge runs so deep. Quite incidentally, groping to find Spain, I stumbled across an article on Spherical Harmonics—missed in my careless education—and I am prepared, also, to measure facts against him in this stiff arena. This is the advantage of thumbing around an encyclopedia. It is hard to hold attention on the thing you seek, but you pick up here and there an unexpected point of culture. I hope that some night at dinner Spherical Harmonics will drop casually into talk. While my careless memory holds its seat I have command to unmeasured depths of curious speculation, and it is a night when I shall shine behind my soup.

I am commended to the Isle of Man and the lonely mists of Scotland. An acquaintance of mine possesses an engraving of lofty moorland with shaggy cattle grazing in the wind; and a great steer forward in the picture resembles Thomas Carlyle with morning hair uncombed and invites me to philosophical discourse in his rainy pasture. The fiords of Scandinavia beckon, and a ship lies beneath their mighty cliffs like a children's toy in a shallow gutter below the stable's towering wall.

And there is the North Cape, where a traveler stands as outpost to the Arctic Ocean—I steal the phrase from one of Casper's pretty booklets—and sees the sun through the full circle of its summer course, as if nature to save a thrifty

penny had closed the lease upon his lodging for the night and had thrust him in default of rent a vagrant to the streets. I would listen to the pounding of the tide against the Hebrides and search for Merlin in the ghostly hills of southern Wales. Or, if I were a salamander to endure the heat, I would visit Rome which is highly spoken of by tourists.

But I am lazy and prefer the places where I have already been. In my memory there rises the twilight of the English Lakes where cattle graze in the endless banquet of the hills and canoes float off from supper to search the laggard stars. Day lingers on the mountain tops to guard the sleeping towns, and there is never an owl that can keep to its bed till dark. I recall a bet whether the sun would be dropped from sight at half past nine. It loves these summer lakes and meadows of the north, and it sits like a loafer in a tavern for the closing of the shutters.

And there are parlors spiced with recollection of bitter beer, thatched cottages for a noonday lunch and winding roads that mark the hills. The clouds of England are always on a journey, mounting forever to a windy chariot that drives them to the sea, and I am persuaded that their thoughts run truant to the far-off islands of British rule. The tangled roofs of villages and of city are snarled in the plot of a thousand years, and I hear the restless foot of time upon the cobbles.

"—canoes float off from supper to search the laggard stars"

Or the mighty nest of London offers its familiar streets and the suggestion of a hundred books. The wall of the Roman city may be traced in narrow lanes of crowded commerce until the circle of its demolished gates leads back to the dirty present Thames. I see phantom wherries on the river singing up to Vauxhall. The Globe, the Bear pit, the Mermaid and Temple Bar may be placed in filmy shadow among the modern buildings. Burbage and Betterton act no more to the applause of box and gallery, but there are newer players I would wish to see.

Or Paris comes to mind—the glitter of its shining pavements, the deep shadows of Notre-Dame, its towers where one ranges across a medieval world of bell and gargoyle, Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre with its grass-grown yard where once I sat on a sunny afternoon. Saint-Chapelle glows from its heart of ruby. There are lounging boulevards for brandy or a colored ice, the Bois with its parade of painted fashion, Chateau Madrid and its merry one-step that so stirred the vagrant spirit of my sentimental trousers. There are dinners to be had by candlelight on the terrace of Saint-Germain with Paris winking in the night. Streets wind in the sordid glitter of Bohemia. Moonlight touches the Seine to a stream of silver memory, as if its waters ran freshly from a mint where happiness is coined. Nor would I despise a racketing journey to Montmartre—five singing

in a cab—where lively bottles pop and folly sports till dawn. These are the pleasures to which Casper's cunning shop invites me—these the joys to which his swift steamers bear me on the vagrant summer sea.

I would revisit Venice and float 'twixt earth and sky. I would sit to a foaming stein at Munich and forget the war that bruised the world.

I would see again the naughty tables of Monte Carlo. This, to a Methodist, is the wickedest spot in Europe; but beyond a doubt it is one of the loveliest. And I have wondered why our own dear Chautauqua, which boasts such piety and zeal toward heaven, should have made itself so perversely the ugliest place on earth. We drone here a sober hymn of holiness and give the devil all the jolly tunes; but if Chautauqua and Monte Carlo could pool their opposite merits one would think that happy Eden had come again.

And if a stranger wishes to escape the horrid duchesses at Monte Carlo—wrinkled dames who sit all day by the green seductive cloth and scribble at their systems—he needs only turn his back upon the gaming hall and behold a range of mountains rising majestically from the azure sea. Nature has squandered here its gaudy paint on rock, wall, roof, cloud and sky and ocean; and has left us dingy in the north. One finds a Moorish village clinging to a mountain top that was built when the Romans first beached their triremes on the

shore, castles standing in unconquered triumph on crags that defy the attack of time. At home I envy not the goat's agility, but in this land of sharpest pinnacle I learn the value of his trusty hoof. Or one may sit on the terrace of the gambling hall with wealth undiminished and untampered in his pocket and, as he listens to the concert of the afternoon, he may watch for sails that run on the blue horizon of the sea. Here even a Scotchman might jingle his pennies in his tightened pocket and sit in surest thrift.

I would stand a-tiptoe on the Alps and wonder what calamity and ancient tempest so roughened up the earth. I would watch the lights of Nice that hang like a diamond necklace on the night.

But chiefly I wish to journey to the Italian Lakes and pass a week at Como to sip my coffee in the shadowed garden of the Villa d'Este. A rim of lofty mountains is folded roundabout for the lake's protection from the rude disturbance of the world. Castles of old romance beckon to forgotten days when despots ruled the streets of Rome. There are balconies that may have heard the songs of Petrarch, bell towers that sounded first to the golden ear of Medici and Sforza. Palaces still rustle with faded silk. And now, even in these fallen days, boats glimmer on the water in the night as if a shower of smaller stars were jealous of this lingering beauty and had dropped in envy from the dimmer heavens. Above the

drip of suspended oar—an obligato that outbids the violin—voices blend in quiet melody and urge one to belief that the older poets live again. *O lente, lente, currite noctis equi!* The horses of

"—at Como to sip my coffee"

the dark run fast. Gladness journeys too swiftly on its dusty wheel and leaves a road of memory behind. On Como there dwells a sadness in the night—sadness prophetic that beauty of such a fragile texture must be of short possession and depart to the realm of cherished dreams.

A cloud has masked my garden. My rain-

drenched grass no longer sparkles in the sun. The English Lakes, the glittering Seine, Monte Carlo and the shores of Como melt in shadow. The voices that sounded on the starlit night are but an echo on the far-off edge of memory.

Perhaps, after all, with neglect of Casper's cunning invitation, I shall work at nonsense through the summer and smooth my novel to completion. The thoughts, the charmed association of these lands beyond the sea may not be recaptured into fact, but must remain in the darkened background of the mind through sober days to haunt a silver hour of recollection.